Hallucinations.

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Hallucinations.

by TheDarkestMindWithin

Summary

The Chesapeake Ripper is ruthless, heartless and meticulous.

As far as the public are concerned he has never left a victim alive to tell his tale.

As far as Jack Crawford and his team are concerned there has only ever been one victim to survive the Ripper's attack, an Omega male named Will Graham, he was the one that started the Ripper's tale and disappeared after he was rescued from the Ripper's cruel mind games.

With the Ripper's blood lust becoming more bloody and less controllable, Crawford and his team start their search again for the elusive Graham in the hopes that he will be able to assist in capturing the Ripper, the only problem is that the FBI aren't the only ones searching for Graham.

The Ripper wants his prize back and he won't stop until he has it this time.

Prologue: Before The Ripper Grew His Teeth & Nails.

Chapter Summary

Heat: the part of the Omega's cycle that signals they are fertile and ready to be impregnated by their Alpha, an Omega usually experiences their first Heat between the ages of 12 - 16. A Heat can last anywhere from two days to one week (the younger the Omega the longer the Heat usually lasts), traditionally an Omega who has yet to be Mated will be on suppressants to suppress the Heat whereas a Mated Omega will spend their Heat with their Alpha.

Note: It is extremely rare for an Omega's Heat not to end in a pregnancy, pregnancy can be detected as early as two weeks after the final day of Heat.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

He walks down the hallways of Johns Hopkins Hospital, it's a quiet Saturday morning so there are only a few patients wondering through the hallways, IV drips wheeling along side them or a family member talking about the generic issues of life. There are nurses doing their rounds and doctors looking over their files, their quotas for the day, but he knows from years of experience that this is simply the calm before the storm. In hours, perhaps even minutes, a code will be called and the busy bustle of hospital life will begin all over again. Hannibal Lecter relishes in the bustle of hospital life, the constant movement and demand. The adrenaline pumping through his veins and the split second decisions that could save or take a life.

He strolled leisurely into his office, sat at his desk and looked over the file that had been left by one of the nurses. Today was his day to do clinic hours, his dislike for the clinic grew with every hour he was there. Dealing with the mundane afflictions that could so easily be fixed by a stroll in the fresh air or a few simple painkillers and antibiotics but people insisted on wasting hospital hours and using their pesky insurance that they treasure so dearly. Usually Hannibal dealt with Betas suffering from common colds needing a note and some painkillers, Alphas with strained muscles needing a referral to physio and the odd Omega coming in with complaints about their pregnancy. Hannibal found clinic hours needlessly tedious and having a habit of dragging out longer than need be.

He found himself frowning at his file today however as he read over his last appointment of the day, a gynaecology exam on a male Omega, a procedure that's routine and common enough to be easily handled by one of the nurses. Hannibal would argue that anything relating to the sexual health of an Omega is work far more suitable to one of the nurses but he can't argue with orders, no matter how much he disagrees with them. Although he couldn't deny that an Omega being seen by an Alpha was somewhat unorthodox.

Omegas usually only allowed Betas and other Omegas to examine them so intimately when expecting, the close proximity of an Alpha that was not their Mate always raised more complications than necessary, the studies that had been done were undeniable. Still, he couldn't deny that his curiosity hasn't been piqued by the Omega mystery.

His thoughts on the Omega were left for the day when the code Hannibal had been expecting was called and he was summoned to assess the damage.

Hannibal.

The day drags on in the usual fashion of slow minds and sluggish bodies. I repress the sneer I desire to release when confronted with a particularly draining Omega mother and infant child, a common cold that the mother insisted was something far more sinister, a Beta nurse diagnosed the cold but the mother wouldn't listen and dragged in not only myself but several other Alpha doctors until finally satisfied, and even then only barely. He was the kind of Omega who needed a stricter Alpha and shorter leash.

I walk down the hallway to the Omega clinic that adjoins the hospital, usually Omega's visit independent clinics with strict staff and visitation regulations, unlike clinics that adjoin hospitals where anyone is free to come and go and the regulations on being seen and by whom are far looser. I enter the exam room that the strange Omega is waiting already, he's young and smells nervous.

Rich dark curls and glasses that aren't just for bad sight. His eyes study the room, darting wildly, he takes in every detail as if it creates a different image in his head, I'm fascinated by him and it's been seconds, he's not even spoken.

"Hello," I say, drawing his attention, he uses the glasses to keep from meeting my eye and I can't help but to smile as I take the seat at the desk, he's already sitting on the exam bed in the flimsy white gown, his cheeks are flushed and his complexion a creamy white.

"Dr. Lecter?" He asks, voice quiet, he scratches his wrist as I nod and glance over his file.

"You're here for a refill of Calefaction Suppressants and a routine exam?" I double check, glancing up at him as he nods and swallows, he bites his lip and looks around the room, nervous. He smells of anxiety and I find myself unable to resist release a few calming Alpha pheromones into the room. It's rare for an Omega to realise when an Alpha's using their scent to manipulate their body or behaviour but the flicker of his eye to mine tells me he does, I find myself more than a little surprised.

"Is that ethical?" He asks, laying back on the bed as I pull on the exam gloves and move between his legs at the end of the bed on the swivel stool.

"No, but you smell like you need it." I say, helping his bare legs up on the stirrups, his knees pushed up and apart, revealing himself to me. He shivers as the cool air sneaks beneath his gown and his pebbled nipples don't escape my notice. His scent changes again, he flushes when he smells the change.

"Perfectly natural, especially in young Omegas." I say, as I reach into the set of drawers besides me and pick up the bottle of lube.

"I'm not that young." He sounds sulky, his age is a sensitive note, I smile again as I cover my first two fingers in lube and lift his gown as I help him pick his hips up and reach to his unprepared hole. He hisses out a gasp when I push my first finger inside and then my second.

"You're sixteen, Will, you're young." I say as I examine him, reaching further and finding his prostate with ease, everything's normal so I take my time running my fingers over the oversensitive spot, I hide my smile when he hisses and gasps a little higher pitched, even bucking his hips as I massage the bundle for a few moments, working him up into a delicious state, his scent slips from anxious to aroused and embarrassed as I pull out and discard my gloves just as he's panting more openly, hands gripping the railings.

Sweat beads on his forehead, his skin flushed disappearing beneath the gown, he looks beautiful and ripe laying nearly bare to me, as if he were made for me. I stand and swab his forehead and his cupids bow, his eyes watch me hazily, I don't act any less professional as I give off stronger calming pheromones, his tongue is lazy as he comments that this is highly unethical now, I smile at him but don't desist, knowing he wouldn't report me by the end of this.

"I'm going to examine your vagina now, Will." He licks his lips and lets his head fall back against the bed, as if resigning himself to the fact, I sit on the stool and take out the speculum from the drawer, forgoing the lube this time, judging from the smell of him, lubrication wouldn't be an issue. He notices this and sets his jaw, resisting looking away from my hand as I reach in between his legs once more and slowly start inserting the instrument, Will hisses and bucks his hips as I slowly push in, spreading his lips with the speculum, my hunch confirmed. Wet.

Slick puddles on the bed beneath his arse, I note down what needs to be recorded, his Knotting tissue needing a year or so before being mature enough to Knot safely, his cervix is healthy and there are no underlying infections to be noted, he's a well developing Omega. Once all medical formalities are finished with I spread the instrument a little wider and openly smirk when Will hisses and keens from the stretch, arching his back as he grips the railings tighter until his knuckles are white from the effort. More slick is produced.

"Your clit is quite erect, Will." I say, observing the pink pearl protruding from between his lips, wet and pulsing. He whimpers at my words and moans with effort, he's oversensitive from his last Heat he didn't feel, the chemicals in his body keep him functioning as normal but his body still goes through the motions, leaving him vulnerable and sensitive, if you know where to look and what to do.

"And all this slick, if it weren't for the tissue, Will, I would say your body is practically begging for a baby." If Will had been a little less flushed from his body's biology I would have said he blanched at my words, his reaction earns a smile from my lips, sweet and poisonous as I reach my previously resting gloved hand between his legs and allowed my fingers to dip into the ripe opening of his body, he pants harder as my fingers drag over his sweet pearl and towards his hidden treasure, I delight in the soft flesh, soaked around the tips of my fingers. His cervix high and wet, soft and ripe.

"S - Stop," His voice is hoarse and needy, desperate. He's at my mercy and he knows it. He's drowned in pheromones his body can't resist even if his mind fights to stay above the dark deeps of water. I drag my gaze over his body and to his eyes, forcing him to stare back at me as I deliberately drag my fingers just as slowly from his body. Earning keens of painful arousal and unsatisfied moans from his lips until I'm away from his wet warmth.

"Of course, whatever the patient desires." I say, my voice professional and open as he blinks and looks away, up at the ceiling and the walls littered with posters and leaflets. I dispose of the gloves and write up his prescription as he tries to regulate his breathing and regain control over his body.

"I'm going to collect your prescription, while I'm gone feel free to redress." I say, my back to him as I walk out the exam room and into the busy cool hallways. The pharmacy only down the hall so I take my time, knowing Will would be struggling to do much besides working himself up to an orgasm with his inept little fingers. There isn't a line for the pharmacy so it's an easy pick up.

I pick up the Calefaction pills as well as Calenture pills.

Calefaction pills suppress an Omega's Heat, keeps scent at bay while the body works in silence through the worst of the Heat unaided by an Alpha or a Knot, the endless slick that's fixed with a pantyliner, the contractions are minimised to the odd cramp that's easily fixed with a few ibuprofen, their metabolism goes out of sync for a few days but that's easily fixed with larger meals of higher calories.

The Calenture pills are to help an Omega with an irregular cycle into Heat and to help a pregnant Omega with milk production, it takes months for them to work but once they do the Calefaction pills are redundant and a Heat irreversible if pregnancy is not already present. Switching out all of Will's Calefaction pills for Calenture would lead to his immune system shutting down, his insulin levels would spike and his heart would start to fail, so I simply switch out three for three.

The game of restraint comes into play, I would have to wait for my apple to ripen before he could be picked. I walk back to the exam room once I've sorted out his dosages.

He's redressed and sitting with his legs hanging off of the side of the bed, his fingers interlinked on his lap, his hair is damp and the room smells distinctly of slick and the unmistakable scent of cum, he flushes when I inhale deeply and sigh, arching a brow at him, I can't help the smile that tugs at the corner of my mouth when he squirms under my gaze.

"Your pills, William." I say, handing him the little white bottle, he swallows as he takes them, avoiding my touch as he does, I feel a shoot of pride over the extent of my influence over him.

"I'll see you in a few weeks." He nods and leaves without another word. Leaving the smell of his spend lingering the air, my cock twitches as I open my mouth and inhale the remaining pheromones of his release. Exquisite on my tongue.

Will.

I feel the faint itch just along my jugular, the itch that comes from being in such a confined space with so many new scents around. The slight ache to my glands and fever I'm running comes with the territory. Usually I'd just go to an Omega clinic, specially run to keep the stress at a minimum for Omegas awaiting a procedure, not so much like a busy hospital hallway. Bodies coming and going at a constant, Alphas that walk by unchecked. My knee bobs up and down as I wait for my name to be called. The light down the hall flickers and it adds to my anxiety.

I've come for a prescription refill and a routine exam, routine except for the time it's taking to be seen, except for the doctor I've had for the past two years. I try to resist being one of the snotty, demanding Omegas you always see in the waiting rooms of surgeries and the clinics, demanding to be seen first, the ones who ask impatiently why they're having to wait at all. Finally my name is called and I get up eagerly, feeling like I'm on a knife's edge as a nurse in pale blue scrubs leads me through various hallways and into the private room I'd grown used to, she leaves me to change into the white paper gown and to get on the bed.

I just want this to be over already.

She says the doctor will be in shortly before she leaves, I'm always seen by the same doctor, no matter how hard I try to avoid him, he always enters the room. I stare at the white ceiling and count the seconds it takes for him to come. I'm still wearing my glasses and my clothes are neatly folded on the chair by the door.

The door opens and in he steps, he looks and smells as enticing as he always does, I know he makes an effort when it's time for my appointment. He smells of home cooked meals and walks in the woods, he smells of what I want and I know he's manipulating me, *my body*. I fight every time but recently all I've been wanting is him. I've been dreaming about him more and more. I wonder if he knows about my dreams, he always knows more than he lets on.

"Hello, Will." He says, warm and friendly as he he sits at his desk, like he always does. He makes a show of looking over my chart, humming as I watch him, hands folded in my lap, I'm sitting still, I hate lying at his mercy . His scent burns my nose and makes my skin prickle. Makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand as he takes the stool by the bed and swivels round to the end of the bed, he's still reading my chart as he moves, looks up to me with warm eyes when he's finished. I dream of those eyes, pupils dilated until the whites are nearly gone.

"So, just a routine exam and a refill for Calefaction Suppressants?" He says, smiling, I nod, swallowing as I shift and the gown rustles. It's only ever an exam and a refill, I don't trust him to do anything else. He retrieves the usual instruments, the source of my torment in my dreams. I feel the slick between my thighs already, I swallow and lay down, stare at the ceiling, trying not to think about how warm the room is, how there's no windows open and how he smells like the perfect Alpha.

"Are you sexually active?" He asks, rolling back to the end of my bed and helping me put my feet in the stirrups, pushing my knees up and apart, I flush at the rush of cool air that blows up my gown, my nipples pebble beneath the flimsy garment and sweat beads at the nape of my neck. I feel like it's the edges of my Heat but I'm not due for several weeks yet. But the way I feel says differently.

"No." I say, finding my voice hoarse, my mouth dry, he looks up at me from between my legs and hums again, studies my face as if I'm giving a monologue, I fidget under the scrutiny. The material rustles, I wish I wasn't spread open for him. He forgoes the lube, he always does and we never need it, he pushes the cold metal of the speculum in and begins stretching, he's quicker than the first time, he knows my body well enough to know what to look at, I stare at the ceiling and count back from ten when I feel his fingers slip inside my heated folds, dipping into sensitive parts inside of me that I've never had the courage to look at.

"Your Knotting tissue is fully mature now, there's nothing keeping you from Mating." He says, he's between my legs, I feel his stubble brush the inside of my thigh and I inhale and squeeze my eyes shut, I feel his breath on my skin and between my spread folds, my glands pulse. I feel like my skin isn't mine, like I need to get out of it.

"I'm not overly keen on what comes with a Knot." I say through gritted teeth, his fingers massage my clit and I feel the slick puddle at my arse, it's hot and cools quickly in the air. He's still between my thighs.

"Your body is, your cervix," His thumb pushes against the part inside of me that's always so high and wet for him, I gasp and clench my jaw and my body, trying to maintain the dignity of not cumming. He's stolen all other dignity.

"Open and waiting." He says, he retreats and he's sitting between my legs as if nothing had happened, he's removing the speculum and removing his gloves, my body feels like jelly. I feel like I'm twelve again and going through my first Heat.

"It's going to be waiting for a long time." I say, my voice low and close to a sneer. I don't want a child, a Mate, I don't want to be an object, I want to be me. He gets up and walks to my side, I watch him through the edges of my glasses, he's writing. I hate having him this close, the musky scent of his body drags down my throat, the details of his face, the fine lines ingrained into my mind. I watch, on the edge of an invisible cliff as he moves to where I can't see him, quiet fills the room, my pulse pounds in my ears.

"I don't think so." He says, returning to my side, a syringe in his hand with a thick white liquid inside, it reminds of syrup, almost.

"What do you mea - ?" He plunges it into my neck, it weighs me down like bricks, paralyses my body as I sink into unmovable consciousness. My eyes follow him as he puts the syringe away and turns back to me, he's closer now, I want to move away but can't. I can't move anything except my eyes but even that's becoming harder.

"It's a simple sedative, for spasm prone patients. It'll wear off in a few hours, but that's for later." His fingers stroke my hair, as if I were his Omega and not a patient, he's smiling more now, his eyes affectionate as he bends down and kisses my forehead and then, with the weight of a feather, he kisses my lips. Warm and full against mine.

"I've wanted to do that for a long time." He says, standing and looking over my body, I feel naked despite the gown.

"I'm going to be gentle, Will. Your Heat is only just starting so I will mark you and Knot you and then I'll move you somewhere you'll be far more comfortable." He talks as if he's making sense, as if he's sane. He touches my body with gentle hands that makes my skin crawl. He removes my gown and positions me so I'm laid bare, he uses the stirrups to keep my legs up and open for him, seeing as I can't.

I want to kick and scream, I want to run as the dread bubbles away in my chest, I shouldn't be starting my Heat, I shouldn't be here. He brushes his thumbs over my erect nipples from the cool of the room, he massages the nubs and I wish I could do something. I wish I wasn't awake. He sucks one into his hot mouth, scorches my skin and I wish I could close my eyes but I'm unable to. He switches once he's satisfied.

"I switched your pills, the first time we met. Only a couple at first." He's talking as he stands over me, undressing. Skin that I had imagined in my sleep for so may nights slowly being revealed, I wish my mouth wasn't so dry.

"Calenture and Calefaction." I feel hysteria bubble in place of dread. I feel white edged terror in my veins. I feel bile in the back of my throat. I feel betrayed in my own body.

"I kept switching them until you were only on the Calenture, then I waited." He continues, his torso bare now, his shirt neatly folded atop my clothes. He starts with his belt buckle.

"Now it's time." His trousers, his belt, his boxers, they're all folded and place on top of my clothes. He stands naked at my side and he turns my face so I am forced to look at him. Forced to acknowledge the very part of him that will take away every part of my body and make it his.

"I won't claim your throat, we'll build up to that, when you're ready. When your cunt gapes for all fifteen inches, when your voice quivers with the burning need to be Knotted." His voice sounds as if he's talking me through a routine exam, as if he's taking my temperature and talking about the weather. I wish I could stop my mind but I can't and he moves, walks to the end of the bed only he climbs on top, efficient and careful. I hate the grace of his movements as he settles between my raised legs.

His hands firm and hot on my skin as he caresses my skin.

"You're going to be mine, I'm going to protect you, Will." He vows, I believe him and it terrifies me.

He kisses along the inside of my thighs, my skin breaks into goosebumps, his lips are soft and warm against my skin, his lowers closer and closer until he's back between my thighs only there's no pretence now, there's no boundary keeping him from doing all he desires and so he takes what he wants. He eats me out with vigour. *Passion.* He makes me cum and if I could I would have screamed and I would have buried him deeper. Being frozen is a mercy. I get to keep the touches that would break me.

He crawls up my body, he's hard muscle against me. I wish I could push him away. My glands itch and my jugular pulses.

He lets his nose drag over my throat, he drinks in my pheromones, releases his open that induce slick and painful contractions from my cervix as it searches for the cum that has yet to be pumped into my body. I starve for it even if I don't want to.

His teeth are sharp and wet and shine in the artificial light, I want to scream as he opens his mouth wide.

I want to thrash and run as he sinks down around my throat.

I want to die as he closes his mouth and white hot pain shoots through my body, blood gushes into his mouth and I'm claimed.

I'm Mated as Hannibal Lecter's Mate.

If We Were To Meet Again, I Wouldn't Tell You She Looks Like You.

Chapter Summary

> Rut: Rut usually occurs for the first time in Alphas between the ages of 13 - 16, it's the final stage of puberty and is a sign that the Alpha is virile and able to impregnate their Omega. A Rut can last anywhere from three days to two weeks (the younger the Alpha the longer the Rut usually lasts), traditionally an Alpha who has yet to Mate will use guards to keep from claiming the Beta they may use during their Rut whereas the Alphas Mated with an Omega will spend their Rut with their Omega.
>
> Note: It is extremely rare for an Alpha's Rut that is spent with an Omega to not end with a Mating bite, Mating bonds can be felt as early as a week after the initial bite was made.

Chapter Notes

> It's deliberate that her name hasn't been revealed.
>
> Without Beta.

The scene laid out for them is familiar, like watching a part of a film once one night and then finding it on TV again a few weeks later, there's a fascination that can never be dampened enough to turn over but there's not enough curiosity to watch the whole film all over again.

Jack Crawford was beginning to feel the Ripper's crimes were beginning to mirror this feeling. The precision and the detail were present but the interest fell flat and he knew the Ripper well enough to know he wouldn't just lose interest, unless he already had his eyes somewhere, his mind playing with other sick and twisted ideas.

Whatever was happening, Jack didn't like the way it was going.

Three Alphas, two Betas and one Omega, the Omega was the detail Jack didn't like. The Ripper hadn't killed an Omega before, meaning he was evolving or this wasn't the Ripper. The Alphas were naked with their Knot muscle perfectly extracted and laid between their thighs on the carpeted motel floor. Their eyes removed and wrists slit and bound behind their backs. Jack's skin prickled at the sight.

The dishonour such a sight brought to twist around his gut, years and years of ingrained shame played across every Alphas mind when they saw this. They had been stripped of their status. Jack felt a strong wave of disgust run over him towards the Ripper, nothing with a mind worth saving could create such horror.

The Betas were found in the motel's pool with the Omega, the Ripper's usual layout only the third Beta having been replaced by the Omega, Jack allowed his team time to photograph and process the room while he went to view the pool.

Lights had been set up already and evidence and photographs were already done as it was outside and storms were expected to come in either late morning or early afternoon. They couldn't risk such a drastic contamination. Jack sighed with resign as he looked over the scene.

The Beta females dressed in the elaborate lace dresses that clung to their pale flesh, their once silky chocolate hair drowned in halos around them with the intricately stitched veils covering their eyeless faces, their blue lips kissing the white material, Jack saw the waste and none of the beauty of the scene.

The Omega brought him an undeniable feeling of failure. The Omega male's youth obvious even without the glow of life and instead the cloak of death. Soaked silk clings to the pale flesh of his body, his veil covers the sharp slopes of his cheeks and the icy purple circles beneath his eyes. Long white fingers wrapped in intricate designs of silk.

The pool is dyed black but bleeds into none of the bodies, a sign of purity that Jack is tired of seeing. A motif of the Ripper. The lilies that tangle in the Betas hair are tinged brown and bruised. The details are dizzying to him, he craves more but doesn't know what the *more* is.

More bodies? Jack knows that's not it. He wishes to know more of the story that is being written.

Jack.

"The Omega still has his eyes?" Katz interrupts my thoughts as she snaps a shot of the scene before us, her breath blows silver smoke into the cold winter night, I inhale stiffly and flex my leather clad fingers at my side. This is a waste that will have to be paid for.

"We'll know more later." I say quietly, turning away from the sight with Katz following, she's a small Omega with far too much spirit but she's one of the best on my team and has never let the subject matter of the case affect her.

"You still think it's the Ripper." It's a statement that I give no response to as we walk out of the crime scene and towards the cars, as well as the reporters that were gathered around, eager for details of the inhumane murders. Freddie Lounds doesn't escape my notice, her fiery hair forms a ring of fire around her face, setting off the dark colours of her attire.

"There will be no statement made tonight." I say, my voice firm and unquestionable as Katz breaks from me to talk with Price and Zeller. Lounds remains on the edges of the red tape,

watching me, challenging.

"The Ripper strikes again, Jack?" She says as I draw closer to her, watching her as she bites her red lip and pulls out her pad of paper and pen, always the dramatist as she pushes her curls aside and begins writing, as if taking an interview. She is boundless.

"I'm sure whatever I have to tell you Ms. Lounds won't be enough to satisfy your readers." I smile but it is without meaning or warmth or malice, it's simply a stretch of muscle and skin. She returns it with dead eyes that see far past any statement she could elect from me.

"It's a shame the Ripper's only surviving victim escaped the FBI, Jack," My smile drops and hers brightens with malice, she cocks her head fractionally to the right and continues to write, her eyes fixed on mine all the while.

"And just how - ?" She clicks her tongue at me as if I'm a dog stepping out of line, I fail to suppress the growl that slips past my lips as she grins and slips her notepad away, pen still in her long fingers.

"Just how is Will, Jack?" She walks away before I have my hands around her neck, she knows that while she may be able to spread lies and half truths and smear the FBI's scandals all over the internet but she did not stand immunity from the impulses of an insulted Alpha. She doesn't look back as she walks away into the shadows and Katz calls me back to the car. I spit the bile from my mouth and slip into the awaiting car.

Price and Zeller in the back and Katz besides me, I pull away too harshly and speed down dead road and wait until the pounding of my pulse in my ears subsides before I finally speak.

"We need to track down Will Graham." The silence that fills the car around the roar of the engine says more than any words could.

His fingers are blood soaked, his eyes are black without any white and his teeth are yellowed and rotting. He's a corpse of the man he had once been. His cheeks are hollowed and the bone threatens to break the fragile skin that is so tightly stretched over his skull.

The smell of rot fills his lungs and burns his throat as he clings to the small child in his arms and runs down the endless black hallway, he tries not to cry as she whimpers in his arms. The walls are wet and mould ridden, the floor is rotten wood with jagged sharp edges that bite his flesh. He feels the hysteria rising again, memorised from those years earlier. He thinks and suddenly he drops her, she falls between the cracks of the floor and disappears into the black, his throat seizes, keeps his scream from birthing to the air.

He collapses, body dead weight as he stares at the starless light, he looms over him and he can't escape the touch of his rough finger dragging over his skin, leaving a raw trail of blood in his wake.

"I found you," His voice is twisted and strangled and leaves his ears ringing.

"Both of you," His lips touch his -

He wakes drenched in his sweat and something else he doesn't think about, doesn't want to acknowledge. He lays against the soaked pillow cases and bed sheets and stares at the starless night through the skylight. It's raining, the rain hits the roof and echoes around the silent night. He swallows and tries to slow his breath like his therapist told him to.

In, hold for five, out, hold for five, repeat until heart is slower. His eyes are tired and his lips are dry, he licks them as he reaches to his side table and retrieves his glasses, wiping his face with the hem of his soaked top before slipping them on and moving to sit with his feet planted to the soft carpeted floor, he flexes his toes and stares as if he'd see the wounds of his dream actually there.

"Fuck it," He sighs lowly and stands, earning several raised heads from the dogs as he clicks his tongue for them to stay as he slips out of his room for the linen cupboard in the hallway just outside his door, he grabs several towels but doesn't bother with fresh sheets, he can do that in the morning, he snorts softly and shakes his head at the thought. *This is the morning.*

He strips the bed of the sheets, discarding them to the floor as he lays the towels over his pillows and mattress, putting his glasses back on the table before he strips of his top and shorts, the material clinging to his skin uncomfortably.

He slips back into his bed with the door slightly ajar and the dogs around him and shivers and tosses but slips back into a black abyss of dreamless sleep. He likes the dreamless nights.

Dreams never brought him any good.

The sun pours over his face through the open skylight, wakes him from his sleep. He groans as he sits and reaches for his glasses, rubbing his eyes as he wakes up. The curls of his hair stick to the back of his neck, damp from his restless night, he knows he needs to get it cut but that means going into to town and he only likes going into town when he can't avoid it any longer. He runs his fingers through his hair a few times before he drags his sweat soaked body from his ruined towels.

He's had a few hours added sleep but the rising sun is a sign he should get up. Will gathers up the ruined towels and crumpled clothes and sheets from the floor and dumps them in the large hamper in the laundry room for later, he checks in on the baby on his way to shower, she's asleep in her white crib with her cuddly toys, he smiles and shuts her door to keep Winston out. He'd only wake her too early if he got in.

Will savours the release the hot spray of water the shower brings his body, the aches in his back and neck washing away with the dried sweat and the dried white stains on the insides of his thighs and along his naval, drowns his wet curls with apple and lemon scents, he avoids the parts of his neck and shoulder that are mangled scarred tissue that smell no matter what he puts on them.

He steps out from the warm spray of water once the water has run clean of suds, grabbing his towel from the railing, dries his face and hair before wrapping it around his body. He wipes at the steamed up mirror and sighs as he looks at the tried bags under his eyes and the drag of his mouth. He's more tired today, feels the drag of his movements as he returns to his

bedroom and gets dressed in baggy sweats, tatty and old. They hide his body, he just wants to hide today.

It's too early to wake her up so he makes a cup of coffee and goes out to the front porch to collect his morning paper from the doorstep, it's wrapped in plastic to keep it dry from the rain, Will unwraps it as he goes down the hallway back to the kitchen, going out to the back porch with the dogs following close behind, they're not hungry yet.

Will sets his coffee down on the dry table that's sheltered and sits in the soft armchair with a huff, looking over the soaked garden as he puts the paper down and puts his glasses back on. Today's not the right day to go into town.

The sky is dark grey and there's spots of bright sun peaking through but the air still smells of rain and the clouds are too settled to disappear before more rain comes. He can almost fool himself into thinking this might actually be the life he's always wanted and not a simple impostor, that the house and the garden is his dream home and not just a cover, he can almost lull himself into believing until he opens up the paper and sees the bodies staring back at him. Eyeless and now lifeless.

He throws up onto the varnished wood flooring. The few sips of coffee and water he had in the night burns his throat as it comes back up, he retches and heaves for several minutes, the paper thrown far away from him as he falls to his knees and pants from the shock.

They've never been in the news this far before. He's never had to see his crimes. He shakes and squeezes his eyes shut, trying to escape his mind but failing. The rain pours and the smell burns his nose.

Will.

Her screaming cries bring me out of my shock, the painful pangs in my chest as she cries ring through the house and garden, calling for me. I'm back on my feet and running through the house in seconds, Winston's whimpering and scratching at her door to be let in, I turn the handle and push the door open, he runs in ahead of me while Baxter and the others wait in the doorway, they're not allowed into her room at all. I search out the dark room for any sign of disturbance and once satisfied I go to her, she's in her cot, standing and wailing. Little fists clinging to the white railings, cheeks red and tear stained.

I scoop her up into my arms and hug her tightly. soothing her wordlessly as she clings to my top tightly and buries her face in the crook of my neck, over the mangled scars. Inhaling deeply, hiccuping and sobbing. My breasts ache and leak through my top, they always do when she cries like this. Instinct leftover from when she was a baby needing feeds at crazy hours of the night. She slowly calms as I rock her in my arms and she keeps inhaling.

"I'm here, I'm here, I'm always going to be here." I coo to her as she moves her head to my chest and mouths at the wet spot, I move to sit at the rocking chair by the window that overlooks the garden and lift my shirt for her, settling her to my nipple. Winston takes his space by my leg and I pat him with my arm as I adjust her and sink against the back of the rocker. He looks up at us every so often to make sure we're okay.

He's the most protective of her and I know it's because he was with me when I went into labour. She feeds until my breast is empty and then switches, I rock us and hum a nursery rhyme until I'm empty and she's asleep again, lips puckered around my nipple as her grip on my shirt loosens. I smile down at her as I stroke my fingers over her rosy cheek. Stroke her long brown hair, she has my curls which I'm thankful for.

I keep rocking her until she wakes up with bleary eyes. She doesn't have my eyes. I move her over my shoulder again as I walk us out of her nursery and into the kitchen for some breakfast, although I don't think she'll be hungry. I put her in her highchair and go to fill her sippy cup with water. I fill the dog bowls full of food and refill the water bowls, they eat while I sit back at the table with toast and a fresh cup of coffee, although I don't feel like eating, I butter the toast and run a thin layer of jam over it. I put her in my lap and give her small nibbles of my toast and wait for her to tell me why she was crying.

"Bad dream." She says quietly, the first piece of toast mostly gone and half of my coffee drunk, I hold her close and kiss the crown of her head as she nuzzles the crook of my neck again. I stroke her hair and let my eyes shut as I inhale deeply and try to ignore the slight burn her scent causes in the back of my throat.

"Don't worry, I get them too." I say softly, she pulls back and looks into my eyes, as if searching for a lie, she returns to the crook of my neck when she doesn't find it. I feel her nose nuzzle close to where the scar is, the only part of me that still smells of him, no matter how much comfort she gets from me there is always a comfort she can find in him. In her father.

I swallow down the feeling of failure that the acknowledgement brings. The feeling that I'm somehow depriving her of something by staying away from him but the images from the paper burn away my doubts. She's safer with only me.

If You Read Between The Lines, You Would See Me.

Chapter Summary

> Mating Bite: A Mating Bite is traditionally located on the left juncture between the neck and shoulder of the Mated Omega and the right juncture of the Mated Alpha. The Mating Bite is a scent marker identifying that an Omega or Alpha are Mated to each other, the wound is permanently scented as the partner's scent and acts as a repellent for unwanted suitors. A Mating Bite is a permanent scar and the scent will only weaken the longer it is left untouched by the Alpha or Omega who gave the Bite but will never fully fade unless replaced by a new Bite of a different Mate.
>
> Note: A Mating Bite fades a week or two after the initial first bite and needs to be reopened as frequently as every two days to achieve a strong scent mark.

Chapter Notes

> Hi, sorry for the impromptu hiatus but I have big plans for this fic so I hope you can stick with it through my absences
>
> Without Beta.

She sits at her desk and watches her students pile out of the lecture hall after she's doled out assignments and feedback, they all snatch glances at the newspaper sitting on the end of her desk before they turn their backs for the final time and walk towards the door, the headline reading '***Chesapeake Ripper Apprehended?***' It's a lie, Alana Bloom already knows it is. Knows that it's another pointless lead and new dead end, not that anyone else would say it, until it's disproved and then everyone will say how they didn't really believe it either. It had been the usual way these *'leads'* had gone ever since the murders had started.

She leans back in her chair and puts her boot clad feet up on the edge of her desk once the last of her students had left and the lecture hall door had shut behind them, today had been a particularly hard one. It always is whenever there's a fresh buzz around the Ripper, everyone wanting to exchange theories or pick over the articles that are newly released. It's no better outside of the classrooms, gossip and rumours and even bets passing between barely moving lips and sly fingers. Wanting a murderer caught, not because they murder but because of the desire to want more details, is by far the most dangerous addiction one could suffer, Alana thinks as she looks at her wrist watch and sees that there's only another few hours left of her

working day before she could leave and go home to Margot and Morgan, where the talk of the Ripper would not be present.

She eats her deep green apple as she waits for the bell to ring and for her next class to begin. Her eyes flickering to the headline of the newspaper every now and then before she huffs and throws the paper into the bin unceremoniously.

"My thoughts exactly," His voice echoes around the large empty room and makes Alana jump as she looks across the room at the opened doors. Jack Crawford sanding in the doorway with a large coat and leather gloves on to keep out the colder weather. Alana's appetite for her apple is lost the moment she lays eyes on the man, he'd barely changed since the last time she had seen him.

"It's not as if it's really him," Alana says, chewing the lump of apple in her mouth as she dump the rest of it in the bin after the newspaper, her appetite having dissolved the moment she lay eyes on Jack Crawford.

He walks across the room, removing his gloves as Alana stands from her desk, keeping her eyes on the familiar Alpha, looking past him to the doorway to see if she could make out any officers he may have brought with him. Would this finally be the day? She wonders absently as Jack takes his time to address her again, looking around the large lecture hall with a smile.

"I see you've built yourself quite high, Miss Bloom." Jack says, he takes his time to look at Alana again, the same smile on his face only this one doesn't reach his eyes and Alana wonders if he's really come for what she thinks he has. A glimmer of hope squirms around her belly when she thinks that maybe she's mistaken. Jumpy from all the Ripper headlines.

"What're you doing here, Jack?" She asks, the suspense getting to her as she crosses her arms over her chest and a gaggle of her students enter the hall for their lesson, she tells them to leave as soon as she sees them and they look slightly shocked by her brash manner, but they retreat from sight nonetheless and Alana turns back to Jack with a slightly more stressed expression than a few moments ago.

"No, Alana, it's not really him. Maybe a possible copycat? But he's not the Ripper. I want your help finding Will, Alana." Jack says finally, sitting down at the chair in front of her desk, putting his gloves down where the paper had been as she stares at him blankly. His words replay in her head but she feels unable to process them. Like she's underwater and he's not. More students come and she tells them to wait outside. Jack sits and waits for her response.

She retakes her seat before she gives him one.

"I haven't seen Will since before he disappeared. No-one's seen him since before he disappeared." She adds, crossing her arms over her chest and sitting a little straighter in her chair as Jack's smile comes back and he reaches forward to pick up the picture of Margot and Morgan that sits on her desk, she bites back the urge to take it from his hands. To protect her family from the big bad Alpha sitting across from her. She'd told herself so many times before that she had grown out of her fear of Jack Crawford but here he was, in the flesh all over again, and here she was, scared all over again.

"A person doesn't just disappear, Alana." Jack says firmly, setting the picture back in its place on her desk before picking up his gloves again, getting to his feet, Alana doing the same.

"You have a beautiful family, Alana." Jack says as he slips his fingers back into his gloves and looks around the hall once more, inhaling as if he's relieving a fond memory.

"I'll drop by Friday, we'll talk more then." He says, leaving no room for argument, as he walks for the door of the lecture, pulling the doors wide to let in the crowd of students that had formed outside, he doesn't look back at Alana before turning the corner and disappearing from sight. Alana's left standing by her desk with a cold chill running down her back as her lecture hall is slowly filled with her next class of students.

Alana.

The class starts and goes and finishes all in a blur, made foggy from the chill Jack leaves running down my spine. The paper in the bottom of my bin feels as if it's glowing red, drawing the beady eyes of my students to it, screaming *'Look at me! Look at me!*'

I'm relieved when they begin walking out, a few pausing to check they have the homework copied down correctly, I absently nod my head and try to breathe as many deep breaths as I can until the very last pair of footsteps has retreated down the hall, out of earshot. I'm alone.

Will Graham sits heavily on my mind once I am. His youthful, kind, face burned into every edge of my mind. His rosy cheeks and unruly curls. He was never late to my classes, no matter how out of breath or tired he seemed, he was always in his seat before the clock struck 9 o'clock. He'd always been a fantastic student.

I run over the many different scenarios about what happened to Will after he'd disappeared, had he died in a ditch somewhere? Was he living in the darkest corner of the world, terrified and alone? Or was he somewhere safe and warm, not happy, I don't think he could ever truly be happy again, but maybe he'd found some semblance of peace? I always maintain the hope for that. My phone rings, loud and clear through the darkening room, stirring me from my thoughts.

"Hello?" I pick it up without looking at the caller ID, my eyes on the newspaper in the bin, a week, *maybe two*, and they'll admit that it's not the Ripper. It will start all over again. I wait for a response.

"Hello?" I say a little louder, straining to hear whoever it is on the other end of the phone, there's nothing. My stomach drops, faint breaths that make the hairs on the back of my neck stand are only just audible. I realise who it is on the other end with a cold spike of fear. Like ice sitting in the pit of my stomach and at the bottom of my spine.

"I didn't tell him." I say, as if it'll make a difference to him whether I told Jack anything or not. There's a hint of desperation to my words, like begging would slow the cut of his knife. Silence. Long and deafening is all I receive in return. The faint crackle of breath and the gnawing unease that grows in the pit of my stomach as each second slowly ticked by.

"I - "

"I know what you did for *him*." The line goes dead, a ringing noise that slowly fills my head. I don't know what happens after I drop my phone, after it clatters and collides with the floor gracelessly. I don't know what happens when all I can see is my family dead.

Their blood on my hands for what I did.

The large study is lit by a beautiful hanging chandelier over the centre of the room, the world outside a cold and dark unwelcoming place in comparison to the warm homely interior of the psychiatrist's office. He stands by his dark desk as he puts the ringing phone back on it's stand. The first step in his plan having been put in motion.

He's aware that he doesn't have very much time left before Jack Crawford and his team of whining sniffer dogs come knocking at his door, not that time ever mattered to him. Knowing that no matter how much they would look they would never discover what they so desperately wanted.

Hannibal Lecter moved around his office, tidying away the notes taken from his sessions over the course of the day, none arousing much emotion from him. He's only had three patients, two new patients, one Alpha suffering from a recurring dream that he was being suffocated by a clown and an Omega who was dealing with the sudden death of her cancer ridden ninety-four-year-old Beta grandmother. The rest of Hannibal's working day had then been taken up by the Alpha, if you could call him that as Hannibal had never seen the man do anything remotely Alpha in the several he had been coming to Hannibal,
Franklyn Froideveux.

Anl Alpha that had been coming to Hannibal for several years suffering from a combination of ailments, the most severe of which being a lack of self-esteem, due to childhood abuse at the hands of his Omega mother who had wanted a daughter and a sever, almost chronic case, of erectile dysfunction. Franklyn came once a week and took up half of Hannibal's day.

Today had been a day where Franklyn mostly sat and whimpered and sniffled about his unrequited desire for a fellow Alpha named Tobias. Despite Hannibal's lamentation that two Alphas rarely formed a romantic relationship successfully, Franklyn spent hours pining. Despite the number of years Franklyn had been coming to Hannibal he still had a knack for making Hannibal's tongue in a uniquely distasteful way.

The only thing keeping Hannibal from ending the pitiful Alpha's life was the simple belief that Hannibal held.

The belief that he couldn't start going round killing his patients that wore so tenuously on his nerves. No matter how much he may desire to see their necks split and blood split. It wouldn't do to suddenly have his patients dropping off like flies.

He sits at his desk and resigns himself to wait for the arrival of Jack Crawford and his team.

Hannibal.

Rain patters against the large windows, the wind howls around the leafless trees, there's a light dust of fog. I wonder what Will is doing now? It's a little past eight in the evening when Jack Crawford arrives in his usual assuming manner. His pitiful team follow in his wake, the same team who had let Will slip through their fingers when he had slipped through mine.

"Dr. Lecter?" Crawford asks when I greet him on my doorstep, he looks at me like a dog would look at another across the park, aware but undecided if I posed a threat to him. I smile and incline my head in acknowledgement.

"Jack Crawford," He says as if it's all the introduction he needs, I don't offer any sort of signal to the contrary so I allow him inside, along with the Beta, Zeller, and the Omega, Katz, she catches my eye as she walks past me. Another rarity.

"What can I help you with?" I ask, shutting the door once the three of them have entered, Katz goes to explore my desk, like an inquisitive child. Zeller sits in the chair Franklyn had and Crawford, Crawford stands facing me in the centre of the room. Alpha to Alpha, there is something undeniably poetic about it, about the way he stares at the man he so desperately wishes to capture but how the simplicity of wounded pride would never allow the shackles of my crimes to claim my wrists.

"I assume you know of the Chesapeake Ripper?" I guide my tongue over the back of my teeth, I consider my words, Katz studying the drawings on my desk. Zeller simply watching for the sake of looking like he was actually doing something. Crawford looking but never seeing, I sigh and nod my head.

"Yes, I read in the paper that he was apprehended today?" I say, my tone the perfect mix of intrigue and confusion. Crawford nods along.

"That's the official line, at least," He replies far too freely, I see now why he lost my Omega. I hold back the desire to burn his minions and to slice his throat, promising myself that that particular delight would be a savoured event, a special one spent when Will returned to me. For now I would settle with toying with them. With using them until they had no use left.

"The man you have is not the Ripper?" I ask, playing my role just as it should be played while Jack shakes his head. Zeller gets up and crosses the room to join Katz. I watch them as they pour over my work, Crawford keeps his eyes on me, maybe he is beginning to see?

"No, a copycat at the closest but he is by no means the Ripper." He says, the mutterings that had started between Zeller and Katz catching his attention so much so that he turns and watches the two for a moment before he clears his throat and they grow silent, he turns back to me and I mentally map out where I could murder him and say it was self defence or an accident, the ladder may be the best place. Or perhaps the bust?

"We're here for your help, Dr. Lecter." Crawford says, catching my attention, I look back at him and the events around us begin to click as he reaches inside of his jacket and produces a file with a name printed at the top left corner. I work to hide my reaction upon reading the name.

"Officially the Ripper has never left a victim alive," Crawford begins, retreating back to where Zeller and Katz stand, placing the file down on the table as he turns back to look at me, his eyes steady and dark as I follow him, watching as he produces photo after photo from the file.

"But that's not strictly true, the Ripper only ever left one of his victims alive, even then we're fairly certain that was a mistake of his," Crawford says and I have to cover the snarl his words cause with a slight clearing of my throat as I move the photos carefully around, studying each with a hunger. Memories having been my main source of reference to the Omega up until this moment.

"This is Will Graham, the Ripper's first victim and we need your help finding him." Will's face stares back at me from the photos. Some are from before I knew him and some are from after.

"I promise you Jack," I start, gathering up the photos and the file from the desk with the three of them looking at me.

"I will find Will Graham."

Even As The Snow Falls, I Still See Your Footprints.

Chapter Summary

Bonding: Bonding is a ceremony between a Mated Alpha and Omega. The ceremony involves the cutting of the left palm of the Omega and right palm of the Alpha, letting three drops from each party's palm into a cup. The drops of blood is then mixed with blessed water before the Mated couple drink the mixture after they have exchanged rings during a traditional wedding ceremony.

Note: Unlike with a traditional marriage, a Bonded marriage may not be voided as it is illegal to obtain a divorce if the couple are Bonded.

Chapter Notes

Hannibal is not going to like this part.

Without Beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He stands looking over the icy garden with his coffee cupped between his hands. Inhaling the rich smell as his eyes roam over the quiet world around him. The quiet slowly giving way to the waking birds singing to one another at the tops of the barren trees. The dogs slowly starting to wake, Winston now sitting by Will's feet with a yawn as he looks up at him. The dogs had forgone waking early with Will today and had instead opted to stay in the warmth of his bedroom for a few more hours before they ventured out. Clearly they decided it was safe enough for Will to be left alone for a couple of hours.

Will doesn't mind, his eyes wonder back to the ice covered table by his side, the morning's newspaper sitting atop it with a fresh headline on the Ripper, he lets his eyes close and inhales his coffee again, washes his thoughts of the Ripper, *of Hannibal*. Knowing he could never really wash his thoughts of the Alpha.

He licks his lips as he takes another tentative sip of the still hot liquid, it trickles down his throat with a bitter aftertaste. Will opens his eyes again and looks at the newspaper, he hadn't dared to open the front page and read more on what they'd discovered about the crime scene the Alpha had left in his wake, his stomach twists at the mere idea, not with guilt but with shame. Shame for the way it made him feel, the way his thirst for more, more details, more images, more bloodshed always woke whenever he read the articles written about the famed

Ripper. Will turns his back to the newspaper again, looks at the icy garden and lets out one last breath of fresh air before turning and going back inside.

Sliding the glass door of the frost covered French doors closed behind him once his feet were firmly planted on his stone kitchen floor. He'd forgone his usual fluffy white socks and had instead opted for thick slippers and a dark blue dressing gown. Setting the coffee mug down on the side Will moved around the kitchen, collecting eggs, a bowl and a whisk to begin making scrambled eggs for the little babe upstairs still asleep, clueless to the ills of her parents. Will's only desire in his life was to keep his daughter from ever knowing what kind of ills her heritage involved.

He takes the milk from the fridge door and thinks about Hannibal cooking, the skill he had possessed with the shining knife and rump of meat that Will always tried not to think too closely about. *What kind of meat* - His stomach twists violently and he only just manages to reach the sink in time to keep from ruining his stone flooring.

Emptying the contents of his stomach out into the steel sink with a burning ache for relief, though he could never work out what relief he wanted. He leans against the sink for support once his stomach is empty, breathing heavily through his nose as he squeezes his eyes shut and tries to forget all the time Hannibal kept him -

"Will?" He jumps at the sound of his voice, a cold chill running down his spine despite the heat of his face, looking over his shoulder as he watches the Beta slide the French door shut behind him with one arm as he steps inside of Will's home, his other full of a large pile of fire wood. Will lets out a breath of relief. He must have forgotten to lock the doors. He squeezes his eyes shuts and leans against the sink for support. Breathing through his nose. Everything smells wrong.

"Will, are you alright?" He abandons the wood on the breakfast table and goes to Will's side, his voice is full of concern that matches his frowning face, his cold hands touch the warm flesh of Will's now flushed cheeks as he reaches a hand up to his forehead, his frown deepens. Will feels guilty for making him worry so much, he shrugs off his hands and mutters about being fine. Goes to the breakfast table and sits. His eyes stare at the newspaper he had left outside now sitting in front of him.

An innocent man's face plastered all over the front with multiple headlines and articles asking whether he was guilty of crimes so unspeakable that they didn't even need to mention them to have whoever read the paper know what the man was accused of. Will's stomach rolled all over again and he was up on his feet and lurching towards the sink in seconds, dry heaving as the chair he had sat at clattered to the floor and his daughter began crying upstairs. He's unable to go to her so the Beta man goes for him.

He's left shaking and tired with a horrible taste in his mouth. He washes his face once the heaving has stopped. Shoves the newspaper into the bin and sits gingerly at a different seat at the table. Rests back with his face turned up towards the ceiling as he tries to escape all the murky thoughts of his past. The man they had discovered would be released and it would begin all over again.

"The chair startled her, didn't it, Pancake?" He walks in with his daughter in his arms, cradled to his hip. Her cheeks are stained with tears and she still looks upset but calmer, she snuggles into the Beta and lets her eyes shut. Will wishes that she could find comfort in the gesture like she should.

"Ah, what's this? Someone's getting scrambled eggs!" He says as he goes to the abandoned breakfast Will had started, his daughter cheers up at the knowledge as excitedly reaches for an egg.

"Miles?" Will says quietly, his arms open and hands outstretched to take the child from him, the Beta smiles and obliges, passes the girl back to her mother and turns back to start on the long promised breakfast, looking over his shoulder at the little girl and Will every now and then with a wistful smile. Will, despite his youth, was a natural mother. It's not long after the bread has been on to be toasted and the eggs are cooking away and a fresh pot of coffee has been made that the dogs are swarming around them, yapping playfully at the giggling little girl as they wait for their own breakfast.

Winston whines insistently at Will's feet while Miles makes sure nothing will burn before he gets around to breakfast for the dogs. The whining makes Will laugh and shake his head as he pats his side, getting to his feet and heading towards the back of the kitchen where the dogs eat.

"I'm going, I'm going," Will says, a small smile on his lips as Winston continues to whine, only this time at his food bowl. Will sorts out the dogs and their breakfast while Miles sorts out his daughter and their breakfast. Will sits back at the table once the dogs are satisfied. Watches as Miles puts food on their plates, he doesn't have an appetite quite yet so he drinks his coffee and eats tiny mouthfuls while his daughter and Miles have seconds and laugh and chat about impossible things.

It's after breakfast, when his daughter has gotten up and gone to play in the living-room with the dogs surrounding her, reading to alert Will of any danger. They're left alone. Will sat at the breakfast table picking at his leftover toast while Miles washes and dries the other plates and cups and pans. It's quiet except for the quiet laughter in the next room, it's content and still and then -

"You don't think you throwing up could be - ?" Will feels a burn of shame and guilt when he's asked the question that been playing on Miles mind since he had walked in and found his Omega hunched over the kitchen sink, it was so obvious now that Will feels slow and guilty and stupid for not realising what Miles was thinking sooner. The hope that so effortlessly slips into Miles' voice, the way his eyes flicker from Will's face down to his abdomen hidden by the breakfast table and back up again. The painful joy that is already present. But Will knows what he's asking is impossible. Made impossible with the pills hidden upstairs in the laundry basket.

"No," Will says, softening every aspect of the word as he does.

"I took a test already this week and - No, I'm not pregnant." The lie is heavy on his tongue as he says it. Watching the joy slip away and smash to the ground from Miles face. Like a mask suddenly abandoned. Will wishes things could be different but knows better than to hope that

his wish would come true. It's better this way. Will's lies put an end to the discussion and Miles finishes tidying. Kisses Will's forehead tenderly as they take their unfinished cups of coffee and go into the living-room to join the laughing little girl.

Will.

I sip my coffee, watching Miles babble away to the daughter that is not his own. He would be a good father, just not with me. It's better we don't attach ourselves so messily, *safer*. I think about what I need to get done today, I need to stock up on supplies. Before the heavy snow hits and it becomes near impossible to get into town. Before we're cut off. I suggest that we go into town shortly after Miles has let the dogs out into the garden for a run about.

Before 11 o'clock we're out of the house and walking the long icy path leading into town. She's running a little ahead of us, Winston by her side. Laughs and giggling as she runs around with a ball in her hand, she's only just learning the concept of fetch. The snow gets thicker as we walk, I'm glad I put her in extra layers, thick coat, boots and gloves. Miles said it was slight overkill when he saw her just before we were leaving the house but he didn't argue with me when I hadn't changed her when we were heading out. I think he gets that as much as we're together he doesn't get the final say on my child. I see the bitterly selfish and hypocritical aspects of that but he never mentions it so I don't. It remains unspoken between us.

One day I hope he gets his happily ever after. I don't think I can get mine but he can get his, I'm the stand-in until he finds what he's searching for. At least that's what I tell myself. I don't think that I'm so evil for denying him a biological child. Bullshit.

"Will!" I look up just as I get a face full of snow, spluttering as I wipe the substance from my face, Miles and her laughing loudly as I swear my revenge and gather a handful of snow, throwing it and hitting Miles squarely in the back as he cries out and falls to his knees and then onto his face, I throw another and laugh louder as he monologues a long mocking speech about a cruel world and traitors. Me and her are doubled over laughing on top of Miles by the end of the speech. Fingers nearly numb from the cold as we roll in a pile on the snow. It's almost like we're a family. I could almost believe it too.

But I'll never be able to stop searching the shadows for the imminent threat. The growing threat of the smashed teacup coming back together.

Chapter End Notes

Please don't judge how I've written Will's daughter bc I really know nothing about kids and milestones and this is just fiction so no angry comments asking me if she's x age why doesn't she already know y please!

I Would See You With Flaming Horns At Your Feet Before I See You Stand Before Me With White Wings.

Chapter Summary

> Finger Incision: An archaic form of Omega Claiming by the Omega's chosen Alpha. Performed during the Omega's Heat, an incision is made on the inner side of the Omega's left ring finger. This is an archaic form of a much more customary engagement ring and is more popularly found on an older set of Mates. When a wedding ceremony is complete the Alpha will match the left incision with the same pattern made on the Omega's right finger.
>
> Note: The Alpha does not receive either incision.

Chapter Notes

> I'm sorry for the long gaps between chapters!
>
> Without Beta.

"Do you like the snow?" He watches the snow fall, lighter now, easing away just as quickly as the clouds did in the sky. A revealing sterile blue. He wonders if Will sees this blue sky? Or maybe a grey? White? His thoughts wonder. Wonder well walked paths around Will and all the endless possibilities that surround him.

"Hannibal?" The Alpha turns away from the frosty window, the ground outside now a bright white, harsh just like the bright blue sky overhead. He smiles at the woman sitting in the armchair, the armchair kept for his patients, she's stressed despite her best efforts to make her scent and her posture say differently. Her hair is up in a faux bob, her cane sat besides her, her hand wrapped around it. Her wedding rings newly cleaned. *Shiny.* She wants to show off what she has and the Alpha across the room from her doesn't. The gesture shows the undying tenacity of Alana Bloom that Hannibal Lecter had long admired. One of the few attributes that had kept the woman alive for so long.

"The snow, like the rain or the wind, is a necessity." The man says as he walks back to his own chair opposite the woman, crossing his leg over the other as he runs a deadly hand through his hair. They watch each other without any more words exchanged for several minutes. Silently studying their pray for the first sign of weakness. Or a childish game of chicken.

"I don't know where Will is." Alana says, her grip on her cane shifting, she habitually lifts her shoulder, as if to move her hair off of her shoulder, Hannibal smiles. Cold and satisfied. It's the truth but it's a recent truth, Hannibal can tell, he could always tell when his dear Bloom was lying to him.

"I believe you, just as much as I believe the pigs in your pens grace the sky when we are not looking." Alana scoffs at the man and shakes her head with disgusted disbelief. The threat of the Alpha forgotten as she straightens in her chair, he sees the masked pain the movement causes with her still fragile spine. Even if it has been *years.* Old wounds are stubborn to die.

"Will Graham's whereabouts are as unknown to me as they are to you, Hannibal. I can't make you believe the truth if you refuse to see it." Her words are carefully chosen and slowly spoken. Clear and crisp into the space between them. Seeping into the walls of Hannibal's office as the snow falls to the ground outside. He tilts his head and looks at her, studies her. The red of her lips and her coat, the smell of the leather wrapped that had been wrapped around her fingers before she had entered the warmth of Hannibal's office.

She may not technically know where Will is but she knows someone who might. The older brushes his tongue against the backs of his teeth and wonders if it would be better to simply kill Alana here and now rather than later. He knows the answer and gets to his feet, Alana rises with him. Using her cane to pull her weight. Old wounds are so easily made fresh.

"If I find out you're lying, dear Miss Bloom," Hannibal begins, buttoning up his jacket and straightening his shoulders. Alana's eyes hold his just as firmly. *Unflinching.* Hannibal had always liked Alana's ability to face death in the eye and still be able to be dignified. *Unmoved, to an extent*.

"I will be your Christmas feast," Alana says darkly, sardonic, sliding on her red leather gloves, finger by finger, Hannibal smiles and hums at her but shakes his head politely, taking a step closer to Alana and her delectably scented skin. She holds still when he's in what she deems her personal space, watches him like a deer does when it's neck is clutched between a lion's jaw, knowing their neck will be snapped in two at any second yet they can't help but to hope. *Hope.* Hope is the most dangerous word a person can know, Hannibal thinks as he brushes the tip of his tongue over his teeth once more, this time letting it peak out and run over his bottom lip and speaks.

Speaks the deadliest words a mother could hear.

"I would make Morgan the Christmas feast you speak of, I would take him from your very arms and mould him into the perfect Christmas turkey and then, when he's fat and tastes just as a turkey should, I would slaughter him at your feet and then, once I had made Margot's delectably sterile body the stuffing, I would make you feast with me." Hannibal takes a step back from the shaking woman before him. Her eyes wide and glassy as she looks at the man before her, as if seeing Lucifer stood in all his glory before her. She is silent and still as if her very being had left her. She's a shell of herself in this moment. *Soulless.*

"If you know where Will Graham is and do not tell me, Alana, that is your future." She doesn't speak, watches as the Alpha walks towards his office door and holds the door open for her, Franklyn already sitting and waiting outside. Alana mechanically leaves without

another word passing her rouge lips. Hannibal can imagine her getting halfway down the street, *just* until she's out of sight, before she breaks and crumbles and her knees meet the wet snow and cold pavement. Hannibal smiles with delight at the image and greets Franklyn inside of his office.

Alana forgotten until she is of use to the Alpha again.

Hannibal.

Franklyn is having a better day, he's talking of his fellow Alpha Tobias. Talks about the Opera they saw together, his voice is delighted, deluded and dull. Graceless and hopeful without reason to be. He has no refined taste for theatre but a delectably refined taste for Alphas it would seem as he lets facts of the mysterious Alpha slip past his lips. He continues to talk as I wonder about my office. My hands running over the objects collected over the years. The priceless beauty each possess, I find it worthless in the shadow of Will.

Will.

He possesses my thoughts just as wholly as he would if he were here himself, in the flesh. I inhale the room and it's scent, built up over the countless bodies that had come and gone. None stand out quite like Will's fading one, it had been too many years since he had entered this room, since his body had touched the carpet and the walls and the furniture.

My collar tightens around my throat, I move on to my desk, humming along to Franklyn's voice that had become nothing more than background noise. My fingers trace over my drawings, Will's face found in the ones that stare back off of the page. My fingers curl around the letter opener I had received as a gift many years ago, before Will, before I came here. It is a carved ivory handle and an iron blade. Perfectly balanced despite the odds. A more than worthy letter opener and even worthier throwing knife, I run my nose along the blade, eyes fluttering shut as I think of the memories attached, the scents. The freshest scent being Will's. I imagine the cuts I had given him, the perfect incision on his inner left finger, the true mark that he is mine. I remember the sweet drips of blood that had filled my mouth once the cuts had been made.

The way he had whimpered under my touch, pleaded despite the futility. I had removed that weakness in the time that I had had him. I growl low in my throat as I think of all the times I Knotted Will in this very room, the endless frenzy that had clouded the world around us, his Heat and my Rut. I curl my tongue around my mouth, there is something bitter here that ruins the memories of Will.

The scent had been so overwhelmingly, so -

"Are you listening?! I think Tobias is - " The bitterness to the moment is located and I move without thought, without consequence.

The knife has left my fingers, my eyes flash open and I turn to find the results of my impulse, Franklyn falling to his knees, a few feet from his chair, his hands wrapped around his throat and his eyes bulging from their sockets, staring at me with shock. He chokes, blood stains my

carpet. I am aware of my cock pressing against my trousers, the sweat on my brow. Why his scent burns my throat.

I am in Rut.

The letter opener sticks out of his throat and I sigh as I go to him, kneel into the warm pool of his blood on my carpet, I accept that I won't be able to save it, too much evidence. There's a purr of my Alpha at the sight of Franklyn, the defeat of a rival Alpha.

"Y - " He is choking on his own blood yet foolish enough to try to speak, I hold him steady as he threatens to topple, the life quickly drains from his body and then there is nothing. I let him fall to the carpet, red stains my skin where I had held him. I look at Franklyn's dead form and sigh at the inconvenience it presents. I'll have to redecorate, I'll have to cancel my appointments. I'll have to deal with him once my Rut has finished.

Even more disappointing, my knife will no longer smell so strongly of Will's blood. I take it from Fanklyn's throat, there is a fresh splatter of blood but it's no more inconvenient as the rest. I move around my office and go to my phone and diary to cancel my three o'clock. A wasted afternoon.

I hide away in my den once my day has been taken care of. Memories of Will and my drawer of hidden toys will keep me satisfied through the coming days.

"So, what d'you think Santa will bring you this year?" Miles asks once they're sat in the dimming light of the late afternoon, food having been consumed and hot chocolates now clasped around their numb fingers. Her nose and cheeks flushed rosy red as she sips her hot chocolate and thinks. Christmas was always her favourite holiday. Will smiles and giggles when her cup comes away from her face and she's left with a chocolate moustache and beard.

"A baby brother!" She announces excitedly as Will leans across his seat to hers and starts wiping at her face, not before Miles has gotten his fill of photos though, Will's heart sinks when she's revealed what she wants, dreads looking back at Miles in fear of what he looks like.

"Well, y'know petal that the stork who brings the babies is very busy this year so I don't know if you'll get a baby brother," Her face drops, pouting. Will only sees Hannibal when she does, sees his pout that came as his eyes raked over his medical file - Will turns away from her and sips his own drink, catches sight of Miles and his sad eyes. Will feels sick all over again.

"Maybe next year. What could Santa bring you this year instead?" The innocent child dives into all sorts of things her little heart desires for Christmas that do not involve the eventual patter of tiny feet. Will's thankful for Miles for providing a distraction, his mind still consumed by images of Hannibal. The girl chatting animatedly besides him made so perfectly in his imagine makes it hard to forget him.

It gets darker and the snow gets thicker before they leave for home. The small child tired out so completely that Miles carries her on their walk back to Will's isolated home. Miles takes his hand in his, the girl resting in his other arm against his hip as they walk the path home,

the little girl running ahead, full of energy from the hot chocolate. Their breath silver clouds in front of them. These moments Will could fool himself into believing that they're a happy family. Miles talks all the way home, talks about everything and nothing and Will only has to say little things back, he prefers being quiet, he's thankful that Miles prefers being loud.

Will lets Miles put his sleeping child to bed without him when they arrive home, occupied with letting the dogs out and filling up their bowls full of food, he trusts that if there was someone here the dogs would have alerted him to their presence and Will knows the layout of the home, knows where he will find the tools he hides from Miles if there is trouble lurking in the shadows but there is none and Miles arrives in the kitchen all smiles and red cheeks.

His fingers are cold as they caress Will's skin, delicate and caring. Will melts into the touch, lets himself relax into his cold fingers against his cheek and his scarred up neck. Miles never asks how Will got so many scars. Will knows that Miles hopes that he'll tell him when he's ready to, Will never plans on being ready. In the back of his mind Will is bitterly waiting for Miles to stop being patient. He doubts he ever will.

"I've missed you," Miles murmurs as his fingers explore the edges of Will's body, careful and delicate as if he's a china doll, maybe he is.

"I've not gone anywhere," The young Omega replies, his voice a shaky hairsbreadth from Miles' lips, the Beta smiles knowingly and leans an inch away from Will, they stare into each other's face and it's almost like Will is naked before him. He wonders how this wonderful Beta could find love for Will when Will gives him so little reason to be loved.

"Hmm, debatable," Miles teases, an easy smile growing across his face as he takes a step back from Will, removing his hands and holding one out for Will to take, Will smiles, it's not as easy, and takes Miles' offered hand, Miles leads them up the house towards Will's bedroom.

Will is barely a foot inside of the bedroom before he's pressed up against the bedroom wall, lips attacked by Miles', fingers pressed into his body. He inhales and panics but it's only Miles. Miles being impulsive. Will tries to relax as his lips are kissed and a tongue slithers inside of his mouth. Miles Beta cock presses against his thigh and begins to rub up and down, Will tries to keep from pushing him away.

He moans when Miles' hand reaches between them and rubs at his clothed heat. He knows Miles likes it when he moans. Before long Miles leads them to the bed. Lays Will down against the soft mattress, his hands slipping below his shirt as Will lets his arms stretch above his head, he stares upwards as Miles trails down his body, his body is slowly revealed. Cool air raises goosebumps and his breath hitches.

His eyes shut and he's back *there.*

Hannibal between his legs, fingers digging into the flesh of his thighs -

Will gasps, his fingers press to Miles' skull, the close cropped hair scratches against the pads of his fingers -

Will.

Miles falls to the empty side of the bed, our chests rise and fall in fast rhythm, trying to catch our breath. His fingers tangle in mine and he brings my knuckles to his lips. The house is silent and dark. My head rings with endless thoughts. Miles' fingers trace over mine, I know he's thinking about the marks. The marks he never tries to reclaim, never touches unless I want him to. I don't know how he can stand it. The constant reminder of Hannibal -

"You never speak about him, y'know," My breath hitches and I keep my eyes fixed to the cloudy night sky.

"Him?" I play dumb, hope that he won't continue with where this conversation will lead. His fingers touch the incision, the one that will never be taken back. I close my eyes and breathe through my nose. Close my eyes, ready myself for -

"Him. The Alpha, the one who gave you all these marks," Miles says, his finger brushing deliberately over the incision as I take a deep breath and open my eyes, I don't look at him.

"Oh." I murmur into the dark, Miles lets out a huffing sarcastic laugh, shaking his head besides me against his pillow, lifting his arm and bracing it behind his head, he stares at the sky overhead now.

"Oh, my arse," He says darkly and I smile despite thinking it would be impossible to do s.

"You know full well that you don't talk about him, not that I blame you, he obviously did quite a number on you." Miles says, I feel his eyes on me again and I finally find the courage to return his look, there's twinkling amusement in his eye, curiosity dancing alongside but there's also the burning edges of regret.

"I'm sorry," I say, because I can't take back time, because I can't make it so that Hannibal never happened. He smiles and shakes his head, reaches his hand and lets his thumb delicately wipe away the tears that form at the corner of my eye.

"Don't be sorry," He whispers, fingers trailing along my cheek and jaw once my tears are gone.

"I don't know how you put up with me," I say, shaking my head and sniffing. I look up at the ceiling and try to calm the raging war that burns within me, burning hate towards Hannibal and burning regret towards Miles. He chuckles besides me and the sheets rustle and the mattress sinks as he shifts his weight, moves to loom over me, his fingers hold my jaw, his eyes gaze into mine and his lips tenderly touch mine, slow and chaste. I kiss him back. I love him back.

"Because I love you," The words sit between us for minutes, he watches me without expectation and I watch him with all my burning feelings, the wars raging inside my head and I speak, whispered words against his soft lips.

"I love you." And it's not a lie, not when I say it now. When I say it about the little things. It's not a lie when I think about all he does for me and all he does for my daughter. It's not a lie

because I do love him, but I don't love him the way he loves me.

It's not a lie.

He kisses me and it starts over again, his body and mine and the flashbacks of Hannibal. The burn against the back of my throat as I think of how much better sex felt with Hannibal than how it feels with Miles. I don't think about what that means.

The Flaw Of The Loyal Is A Blindness Incurable To The Evil Incurred At The Hand Of Icarus.

Chapter Summary

Omega Pregnancy: An Omega pregnancy only occurs under two circumstances, during an Alpha's Rut, or if an Alpha is not present in the relationship, an Omega's Heat. Pregnancy is detected as early as two weeks after conception at which time the Omega may start to experience any or multiple of the following symptoms: Tender or swollen breasts, fatigue, nausea, cramps or light bleeding and food aversions or cravings. Omega pregnancies can only be terminated in the first six weeks from conception, after this time termination is no longer an option due to Omega and Child Bond Laws. Omega pregnancies are usually nine months.

Note No. One: Omega pregnancies are different from Beta pregnancies and follow different parameters of termination and progress.

Note No. Two: An Omega separating from their chosen partner during pregnancy is to be avoided at all costs to avoid unnecessary trauma to Omega and child.

Chapter Notes

Please lemme know your opinions on this chapter?

Without Beta.

A week passes without word of the Ripper.

A week passes and Jack Crawford is still searching for his Ripper.

The imposing Alpha stands before the trio of the Ripper's most recent victims, they lay in a line in the morgue. On slabs of cold metal, they're bodies as cold as what they lay on, skin as pale from death as the walls bleaches away by the unforgiving light of the room. The room is as unforgiving in temperature and smell as it is in light. The room is icy and leaves a chill along your spine while the walls linger with the scent of death. The smell clings to his clothes, his skin, *his thoughts*. He looks at the bodies and studies them for answers. Answers that he has yet to find from within them. He inhales deeply despite the thickly sweet scent that clogs his throat and mouth and nose and mind when he does. He needs to see the picture that's being painted for him but for him to see it he needs eyes. *His eyes*.

His first set of eyes escaped, ran away before anything could be seen through them and his second set had been locked away for the past week in Rut. Jack needs his eyes, he knows he'll have both back within his grasp soon but he's beginning to doubt he could wait much longer. His blood lust for the Ripper's blood slowly becoming as strong as the Ripper's for his victims. Jack Crawford craved to make the Ripper his very own victim.

He just has to be patient, he reminds himself, opening his eyes once more to stare at the bodies before him. A little longer and Hannibal Lecter would find Will Graham and Will Graham would find him his Ripper. Jack searches for the untouched clues he knows are present on the bodies.

"Even you can't force secrets out of dead people, Jack." Her voice rings clear through the mostly empty morgue, ricochets off of the sterile walls, Jack turns towards the Omega by the doorway with a familiar smile, she doesn't smile back as she enters the room.

"Maybe not, but I can try." The Alpha concedes, a quirk of his lips admitting his amusement towards Beverly Katz as she comes to stand besides him, looking over the bodies herself before she speaks again, her eyes guarded.

"Y'know, I really thought you had let Will go," The Alpha looks at her from the corner of his eye, thoughtful for a moment before he lets out a sigh, tired, as if what he's having to do exhausts him somehow, Beverly feels a low stoke to the fire in her belly when he does. She hates seeing how Jack is only growing slowly more and more obsessed with the missing Omega. With the elusive Ripper.

It's gone too far now.

"I wish I could, Beverly," She sneers her nose at him, he hadn't even tried to make his tone sincere as he spoke.

"But I can't." She turns to face him then, studying his expression, the lines and the furrows, and then smiles at him, cold and bitter.

"Bullshit." The word rings clear through the morgue, as if the bodies around them reject to swallow up the sound. Reject hiding any more secrets. Jack only looks more severely at her when she does. Beverly fails to be intimidated by the Alpha, Jack Crawford was no more a fear for her than the Ripper coming after her. She turns her back on the Alpha and starts for the door she had entered through only moments ago, stopping only when Jack speaks up before she is gone from the room.

"I forget," He chooses his pause deliberately, forces her to turn back around to face him, to ask him the leading question he wants her to ask him. She hates him for it, maybe she already hated him and just needed a final push to realising how true the sentiment was. She waits but he doesn't give, she wants to go so she lets him win, speaks to ask the leading question. The words burn her tongue as she plays along with him.

Senses the drag of the iron walls of a cage being built up around her.

"Forget what, Jack?" She's annoyed, angry, insulted. Feeling as if Jack held the ability to control her like a puppeteer with his marionette. She wants to cut the near invisible strings. He smiles at Beverly with a warm and fatherly face, searches her face and finds, without difficulty, the deep rooted resentment presenting itself plainly towards him. He wonders vaguely if that resentment had always been present, a resentment caused for his lack of protection over Will, or maybe his failure to catch the Ripper? Either way, Beverly Katz was a lost cause to him now.

She only stood in his way.

"That you were so close to *him,"* It's the closest step Jack has dared take towards their friendship, the closest twist of the knife he has dared inflict upon the Omega. She sneers at him in response, baring her teeth, allowing the primal side of their nature take over her for a split second. She barely suppresses the growl that follows before she can reclaim her calm. The slip only leads to Jack grinning at her with an unmistakable beat of triumph. He had hit a nerve that would not recover after they were done talking here.

"We were all close," Beverly's tone is hard and drips with malice towards the Alpha across the room from her.

"*Everyone* was close with Will." She bites back, defensive as she fought everything in her body that told her to clam up, to cross her arms over her chest and to spit venom at the man before her. Jack only stood tall and silent. He planned on teasing the nerve he had discovered until he teased something out of it for himself. Beverly and her loyalty no longer a concern.

"No," His voice echoes that of a teacher carefully correcting their student for a repeated mistake, Beverly bristles with further malice.

"Not quite like the two of you were." There's a deadly edge to his voice. Beverly's body twists inwardly, searching for the wire that ties her body to the Alpha still.

"People were close to Will, but Will wasn't close to people, Beverly." The Omega's skin prickles at him. She wants to say something, snap and snipe and storm away but she doesn't. She stands still. Waits.

"Well, except for you." There it is, out in the open. She smirks with little emotion behind the action. Smirks or she would let out sobs, she would not let her be that weak before the man. She bites her tongue.

"It's my shining personality." She says, sardonic and stoic, escaping the building scream of cries when she does. Jack laughs as if he's heard the best joke of the century. She hates that he does. Hates that he plays the games he does.

"You won't find him." Her assured tone wavers slightly when Jack holds her eye. Laughter and amusement gone now. He becomes the big intimidating Alpha she had never considered dangerous, now she felt Jack Crawford's threat.

"We *are* going to find him," His eyes are dark and his lip nearly curls. His words an oath against her body. She is thankful for the space between them now. For the security guards

upstairs, the security of being found if she screamed.

"You haven't so far." Her voice is suddenly quiet. Careful to poke the bear further. She takes a step back, her foot on the bottom step leading to her escape. Jack sees the move and he has a choice, a choice to stop her or let her go.

"We didn't have Dr. Lecter helping us." She is let go, replaced so easily by an Alpha with a murky past. Beverly cuts the strings from her puppeteer.

"Will doesn't want to be found, Jack." She finds a new courage, takes an uneasy step towards him and then several all at once. She stands closer to him that she had before. She smells how he reeks of death now.

"I don't think that's up to him anymore." His voice has dropped to a deadly whisper, somehow it booms around them, the Omega staring up at the Alpha shakes her head, she is sad for him.

"If you force him out of hiding, Jack, just to feed your obsession with the Ripper, then you're as good as killing him yourself." She turns away again. She is free, she is free of the Ripper and of Jack Crawford. She walks and gets up the first two steps before his voice follows her. It's another twist of a knife in her chest now.

"Better to save one life than kill a dozen more, or is that no longer your philosophy?" There it is, the final note, the final utterance of his words show his weakness, she feels better having discovered it. Less powerless.

"If only you believed in the words you speak as much as I, Jack." It's a final goodbye. She hears him walking now, moving to follow her until they are in limbo. Between the downstairs and upstairs, the living and the dead.

"Strong words, Katz, I only hope you enjoy disappointment." His voice is close and distant, she could disconnect herself from them or she could hold them as a prayer against her cheek. She turns over her shoulder, sees him in the shadow just before the bend of the stairs.

"And I hope you enjoy blood on your hands." She leaves him with the dead. There is nothing she can do for Jack Crawford anymore.

Beverly.

No-one had really thought about it, if they had then maybe Will Graham would have been found already. Of course the fact hadn't been overlooked entirely but rather it had been ill examined. Admittedly if you looked at the facts on paper they didn't mean much. Will Graham and I attended the same lectures under lecturer Alana Bloom on Monday and Tuesday morning, we spoke to the other with seemingly little affection and sat in different areas of the lecture halls, we attended lunch together on Tuesdays for practical reasons, I usually needed assistance with visualisation and Will usually needed help with the more linear rule keeping. The facts were little and innocuous. Until of course they no longer were. Until of course Will disappeared. Snatched away for an Alpha's twisted satisfaction from

John Hopkins Hospital. No-one said that at the time but as time passed that's all anyone really thought in the end. I didn't blame them, I thought it from the start.

When I was questioned by my future fellow colleagues and peers I had told Crawford and his team a well prunes version of my relationship with Will Graham, believable and perfectly understated. They believed it without question. I didn't give them reason to question. I wanted no connection with Will that could hinder my future employment opportunities, I didn't want to be the cold Omega still searching for her Omega kin when I joined Crawford and his team. I didn't want some past shadowing me through my career so I minimised the possible damage and privately grieved and privately hoped that Will would come home one day. I did what I had to.

Just like I did what I had to, at least that's what I tell myself as I leave the morgue, leaving Jack and the Ripper and all the twisted obsession with the Ripper behind me. Jack wouldn't find Will, I wouldn't let him, Dr. Lecter wouldn't find him. I wouldn't let them find Will after I had promised to keep him safe for so long, after I had kept my promise for so long. I wouldn't go back to being worried and restless over him.

Over what might be happen to him if Will was to be found, what may happen to him if he were found. I know the uselessness of worrying, worrying over nothing no less, but I can't stop myself, can't stop my mind wondering through the possibilities as I drive home through the snow that falls thick and fast with the promise of needing shovelling away from my drive and down the road tomorrow morning. I hold the steering wheel too tight. He'd been missing for weeks before he had been found, he hadn't even been found intentionally, it had been a fluke. A lucky coincidence. I shiver at the memory, of the buzz around lectures when we were told Bloom had cancelled her class.

Called away, that's what someone had said, they found Will, someone else had said, I remember my heart breaking when I heard that, they didn't say he was alive, only found. Bloom's gotta go help, rumours and snatches of whispered gossip only grew from that day up until he disappeared again. I pull into my driveway, cut the engine and sit and think. Try to swim through my thoughts back to the surface.

My phone starts ringing in my coat pocket, work phone, no longer important. I shut my eyes and I think of Will, I think of Will and his daughter. My phone rings again.

Again, again, again. Phone calls and texts. I don't care. I leave my car and I walk through the heavy snow to my home. My work phone left inside of the car.

Flashback

He doesn't remember the space of time between his captivity and his freedom. He remembers being with Hannibal and then he remembers being in a cold, sterile room on a soft mattress placed on a steel bed frame. Shivering and crying. He remembers being prodded and poked, asked invasive questions by strangers, he remembers attacking a Beta for attempting to touch his belly. He wasn't prodded or poked or asked any more questions after that. Taken to a small cell-like room where he stayed, he doesn't know how long he was inside that cell. Meals brought to him and toilet needs met but he was never spoken to, he was never touched

or looked at again. Will thought that maybe he'd died and this was the afterlife, he thought that and started to believe it until Alana showed up.

He had only known Alana as his Professor in some of his electives in school, school and electives felt like a past life now, Will hadn't seen the inside of a classroom in so long, the memories he had left untouched for so long only danced around the edges of his mind, snatches of words between them exchanges from foreign conversation topics, they taunt him. Mock what he is now. She steps inside the cell, sits on the chair that had been untouched in the corner, she has a sympathetic face. Kind almost, though Will doubted kindness existed in anyone anymore. How could it after - He looks at her and then away.

"Will," Her voice is a gentle caress, unwelcome and violent against his mind. He hisses at the name, he hadn't been called his name in so long, Alana looks sad when he does, as if she knows why he reacted. She doesn't move to touch him like some others would, an attempt to comfort that would only result in worst hurt, Will's not sure who would end up hurting though. Some part of him doesn't believe he could be hurt anymore than he already has, he's wrong. He knows from the way he curls around his belly that he's not been hurt nearly as much as he could be.

"Do you remember me?" Will looks at Alana again, he couldn't not remember her, he nods. There's a sparkle in her eye, as if his nod confirms something for her. He doesn't care or want to care what. She takes notes, a small pad and pen, writes as if Will can't stop talking. Finally, with a intake of breath that makes his chest ache, as if he hasn't done it in years, he turns and he faces her. Tenderly he traces his tongue over his lip and speaks.

"Where am?" She doesn't look up from her pad of paper, Will can see words but he can't read them. She answers after a minute, it feels like longer.

"An Omega facility, you and - " She looks up, eyes on his stomach, it barely protrudes but you can tell, tell from the way he sits, from the way he smells. Will lets his hand rest on his belly, swallows, Alana continues, as if the pause never occurred.

"The baby need to be monitored, we're trying to track down the Alpha that did this to you," Will clams up at the slightest idea of him, of Hannibal, he curls in on himself and turns away from Alana, closes his eyes tightly and cries. He knows she leaves but he doesn't know when. He's alone again, trapped inside a cage. It was as if they were keeping him here and waiting for Hannibal to collect him himself. He needed to escape, to get away before he was found again.

He couldn't let Hannibal get him again, Will knowing if he did then he would never get away from Hannibal.

The Sharpened Bite Of Revelation Shall Release Unto Those Deserving The Harshest Lash Of Damnation That All Of Lucifer's Tears Will Summon.

Chapter Notes

Do y'all like the longer chapters or would you like them to be shorter?

Without Beta.

The Alpha is left rattled once the Omega retreats from the morgue. He lets her leave, having more interest in returning to the bodies still lurking behind him in the shadows. Jack Crawford watches them as if they'll soon begin moving again. Begin talking, whispering all their unsaid secrets into the world. Jack knows they won't but there's still something that bothers him about the bodies, keeps him from accepting that they no longer have a voice to be heard with. There is something, the Alpha can sense it, *feel it*, about the bodies laid out before him. Something he cannot remove from them, remove from them and give to himself, something dark and rotting and sinister that lurks just beneath the dead sallow skin.

There is something in the bodies that Jack Crawford cannot hold within himself and it scares him, cannot withdraw.

His phone buzzes. The clock on his phone screen says he's been there, in the morgue, all day but he can't bring himself to believe such a thing to being true. He tells himself that it's only been a minute since Beverly left. A few minutes since he himself entered. It's not a work call. It's a Bella call, he climbs the stairs of the morgue as he answers and deals with the call. Leaving the dead for the near dead as he does.

Death wraps itself around Jack Crawford like a cloak in a cold night. Once he is finished with Bella he makes a call to Hannibal Lecter, hoping as the phone rings that there will be an answer today, an end to the fellow Alpha's Rut. Jack wants to tell him that Katz will no longer be a necessary inclusion in the investigation. To assure the doctor that she knows nothing, holds nothing of value to the case. He answers.

It is progress that Jack finally acknowledges. The end of Hannibal Lecter's Rut meaning the return of the Alpha's mind to the case. To Will Graham. Jack Crawford does not return home to his wife. He avoids Bella and her dying body that waits to greet him in their too empty home. If he's truthful to himself she reminds him all too much of the bodies left in the morgue, she is only slightly warmer, she only moves fractionally more fluidly and her heart is slowing to match the nonexistent beat of the bodies in the dark tombs inside of the morgue. On his drive to Hannibal's Jack wonders if it would be better that she just die.

That they finally stopped delaying the inevitable. His grip on the steering wheel tightens and he moves his mind along, away from the subject of Bella and her failing body. He stops the car outside of the Alpha's house, the driveway is thick with yet-to-be-shovelled snow, the only indication that Hannibal Lecter has not been receiving guests. Jack climbs out from his car and makes the careful journey up to the doctor's porch, ringing the bell as he rolls his shoulders to keep the cold from settling into the marrow of his bones. He is promptly greeted by a well dressed and clean shaven Hannibal Lecter.

They exchange greetings before Jack is allowed inside the Alpha's home, it's warm and darkly lit, smells of wood and scotch. Hannibal leads Jack towards the kitchen where he is currently preparing a meal of stuffed liver on a bed of vegetables. They talk of pointless things as Jack sits while Hannibal cooks, they're halfway through a bottle of vintage wine before conversation moves to the Ripper and Beverly and the ever elusive Will Graham.

"I don't see how our dear miss Katz connects so thoroughly to Will," Hannibal admits, when Jack's tongue is loosened with wine and his belly is full with liver of the victims he had been gazing up so longingly only hours earlier, they sit opposite each other now at Hannibal's dinner table, glasses topped with wine with half eaten dessert sat in fine crystal bowls before them.

"There was some," Jack pauses and rolls his tongue around his mouth, takes a drink of wine as he thinks of the right way to put what he was about to say, how best he could avoid coming across the bitter jilted boss of a former employee. He places his glass back on the table, Hannibal makes sure he remembers that Jack is not a fan of putting glasses back on coasters when he next invites him for dinner.

"Chatter, back when Will was taken that Beverly was closer to him than any of us expected, of course nothing came of it but now I'm thinking that maybe something should have." It's an admission that takes Hannibal by surprise, not that he allows himself to show such a vulnerable emotion, he mulls Crawford's confession over the walls of his mind as his fingers brush the side of his glass, picks it up for a slow sip before he finally speaks. Words chosen carefully to keep his fellow Alpha from clamming up away from him. Away from anymore confessions he may be tempted to reveal.

"You can't cast suspicion onto Beverly now, Jack." Hannibal says, dancing around the topic as he studies Crawford's thoughtful face, his eyes fixed to some far away place. Hannibal waits and is rewarded with further revelation. A heavy sigh from Crawford before he continued on with his thoughts and the hidden events that followed Will's escape.

"I'm not saying I would but there was always something about the way she treated the case," His tone is troubled as he speaks, obviously thinking back to when the actual events took place, Hannibal takes the opportunity to probe the Alpha's unguarded thoughts.

"You think that maybe there was something going on, all this time?" Jack shrugs, and drinks before he brings his eyes back to meet Hannibal's, something hidden in them as he does. Hannibal fails to decipher what it is, files it away to analyse more closely later. When he lies in his bed and thinks all things Will.

"You have to understand, Dr. Lecter." There's an edge to his tone that pulls Hannibal in closer towards Crawford, just as he does lean closer to Hannibal. A silent agreement of loyalty to what is about to be said.

"Miss Katz is not your average Omega, she is a *very* intelligent creature, one that I now fear I've *underestimated.*" Hannibal understands what he's saying about Beverly, Hannibal nods once, mostly to himself and leans back away from Jack, back to the space you spare for close acquaintances.

"I'm sure whatever Beverly knows, that was perhaps unknown before, will come to light, Jack. One way or another," Hannibal assures the Alpha across from him, a quiet plan forming inside his head as he does, Jack nodding and sigh, staring thoughtfully at his glass before he looks back at Hannibal again.

"I hope you're right. The sooner we find Will the sooner we can put an end to the Ripper." Jack says, his tone not nearly as convinced as it should be, Hannibal quirks his lips into a small smile and nods, and picks up the bottle of alcohol to replenish both of their glasses.

"Better words rarely said, raise your glass with me." He encourages, the warmth of alcohol warming their faces and their bloods as Jack picks his glass up with Hannibal.

"A toast, to the end of the Ripper's reign." Hannibal toasts, a bubbling warmth in his belly as he thinks of how close he surely is from capturing Will once more, smiling as Jack raises his glass, lifts his chin with pride and sets his jaw. Determined. The kind of determination one sees on a dying buck, too prideful to accept a quick death at the lion's jaw but rather the long prolonged suffering of succumbing to his injuries. Either way the lion would feast on him regardless. Pride was not more heavy than the ache of hunger.

"To the end of the Rippers reign." They drink amber liquid sliding down their throats. The buck and the lion drinking together at the waterhole.

The calm before the storm.

Hannibal.

Jack leaves after being picked up by an equally angry and embarrassed Bella, she declines being invited in while ushering the worse for wear Jack Crawford into the back of her car, stopping only to exchange a simple pleasantry with me before she climbs back into the warmth of her car and drives off. The stubborn buck slumped in the backseat, I stay stood on my porch until the car is invisible in the frosty night, retreating back inside and back to the warm kitchen. Thoughts linger around the insides of my mind, Will and Beverly the most prominent.

Beverly sticks like the first fall of snow does to the stone ground, something about her now glows with unknown possibility. I decide to put the doubt away, move away from my kitchen down the hallway towards my private study. The room lingers with memories of the last time I had been in here over a handful of days ago when I had ended Franklyn's life, I feel no

regret over the taking of his life only that it was not savoured more thoroughly. He had been an exhausting client and even worst Alpha, the product of bad stock and poor manners.

I use Jack's name and password to access the files he has on Will and all the related matters. There is a hidden file on Beverly, one I had never thought important over the times I had read over it but now I felt there was something left to be discovered, another step to finding Will. Another piece to solving the puzzle of his escape of the FBI.

"Where are you hiding, little lamb?" I murmur to myself as I scan the screen of my laptop for the telling admissions of Beverly Katz, the ones that hide in plain sight, lies and omissions of truth so easily blended into carefully curated words that lead to nothing more than an idea. That lead you nowhere more than what they wish for you to see, to understand. I search for these words, the blended reality. The admissions of helpless guilt.

"Oh, my. Miss Katz, I underestimated you." I say, when I find what had been in front of my blind eyes all this time. The dates and the events matching in the independent report and Jack's interview aligning all too beautifully for coincidence to have had his hand in the matter. The key to finding Will on the brink of discovery as I shut my laptop off and move to leave my home. A burning desire to waste no more time taking over me as I collect my coat and car keys before moving to leave my home. The telling secrets of what happened to Will burn inside my head. Determination for the truth wrapped around my soul as I climb into my cold car and start the sleeping engine.

Beverly Katz would finally tell of her part in this.

Even Through The Gentle Caress Of Time, You Are An Unchanged Face In The Light Of Today.

Chapter Notes

Now imagine if I just ended the whole story right here ...

Without Beta.

Flashback

Beverly Katz learns that Will has been found from the lips of Alana Bloom one frosty day after a double period spent in her lecture. She doesn't know what to do with the information when it's revealed, she doesn't know what to do when she learns that Alana is attempting to treat Will. The only thing she wanted once she knew he was alive was to see him, of course she was denied. Denied for many reasons, the main one being that Alana wasn't even *meant* to tell anyone that Will had been found. Sure, rumours had been circulating but nothing had been concrete, *confirmed,* until now. Until Alana took Beverly aside one day after class and had revealed to her that he'd been found.

Now Beverly knew that not only her friend was alive but that Alana knew where he was. Her stomach twisted itself into uneasy knots, Alana knew but Beverly did not. She needed to see him. Alana refused any more information, stating that Will was suffering severe trauma and that they hadn't even been able to get the name of the Alpha that had taken Will from the hospital yet. They still had no idea who had been the one responsible for everything that happened to Will.

It's not until later, after weeks spent spying and studying and listening from around corners and lurking in the background of conversations, that Beverly finds a way to see Will. It's a tedious plan that would, if it failed, end badly. The consequences weren't something Beverly considered at the time as she laid out all the careful details of her plan the night before it would go into action. Studying the weeks of routine for any possible variants. With her heart set on seeing Will, if only for a few snatched moments, would be worth any punishment Alana or anyone else could find to inflict upon her.

Beverly has no plans beyond seeing Will for the precious few seconds, whether she would get anything out of him, and from what she'd gathered from the snatches of whispers from Alana that would be very unlikely, or if she would simply have to accept seeing him would be all she would get. It didn't matter, all she wanted was to see her friend and to see him breathe, to have her own confirmation that he wasn't completely taken from her.

The day starts just as Beverly had planned. She attends class and Alana is there, they go over revision and discuss old cases, if Will had been in the class Beverly would have commented more sarcastically on one of the cases, she smiles at the thought and her stomach fluttered with the idea of seeing him in only a matter of hours.

Hours slowly ticked by, Beverly took her friend's car, a Beta who had owed her a favour, to follow Alana, just in case the woman recognised Beverly's car. It's a long tedious drive that causes Beverly to nearly lose track of Alana's car several times before they finally arrive to a large car park leading to the very hospital Will had been taken from, the Omega thinks there's something particularly cruel about keeping Will in such a place but ignores the thought, rather focuses on Alana as she climbs out of her car and walks the short way to the hospital doors.

Beverly waits for Alana to disappear from sight at reception. Uses the time to retrieve the stolen ID card she'd slipped from Alana's bag the previous week and the lab coat she'd taken the liberty of borrowing from the labs at school, once she's happy with her faux doctor look, she exits her car and follows the same way Alana had gone only minutes ago. She presents her ID badge at reception, having replaced the photo and name of Alana with her own photo and a fake name, she's given a log book to sign and then directed towards the building she's especially authorised to enter.

The Omega is careful with how she walks and where she looks, avoiding security cameras as she walks slowly down the corridors, it wouldn't do to rush and gain attention. The whole affair becomes greatly simplified when she reaches the entrance to the building they're keeping Will. Her stomach twists uncomfortably when she realises it's a Psychiatric Ward for struggling postpartum Omegas. Still, she perseveres, holds a doctor dignity as she uses the stolen ID card to enter.

A reception area greets the young Omega, requesting name and card, Beverly does so with a forced ease, the air smells of sterile cleaners and an echo of babies, her biology works against her as she walks through the corridors, twisting her insides out as her bodies better than her mind that this is not somewhere an Omega should ever be kept, in sterile white rooms without their babies. She keeps her head, only barely, walking through the halls, down corridors and past doors labelled clearly. She reaches F without discovery, almost.

Stopped only by several Alpha's who loiter by a water fountain, they talk quietly, with knowing smiles on their lips. Beverly's skin prickles as she approaches them, the only way to reach section G to go past them, her fears are confirmed when one calls for her to stop when she's a foot or so past them. He's tall and smells of death and birth, Beverly hates it, tries to keep from wrinkling her nose as she turns back to face them. To run would lead to discovery.

"You're an Omega, right?" Beverly nods as easily as she can muster, waits for him to follow up, they laugh at her when she nods, except for the one at the back, tall and stoic, Beverly doesn't like looking at him the most. There's an affinity between them she has no understanding of.

"Well, perhaps you could settle a bet," He continues, laughing harder, it feels wrong to laugh in a place like this, Beverly thinks as she tries to smile along with them, tries to keep her

slipping composure as she knows time before she is discovered slips away like water cupped between hands. Finite.

"If you had to choose, between myself and this one," He knocks at an equally grinning Alpha besides him, who laughs and escapes his arms with ease, like boys in the school playground, Beverly wishes she could disappear. That she'd waited for them to move on with their work rather than walk by them.

"Who would you spend a Heat with?" The question is followed by childish laughter, the kind that comes from a gaggle of children while they watched their friend tell their crush they liked them, Beverly is stumped as to what she's meant to do. How she is meant to answer. She just watches as they laugh with each other, only one Alpha doesn't, simply watches her. The affinity, Beverly realised with a cold jolt of ice running down her spine, between them was one of not belonging. She started to move away when he smiled at her. Warmth that remained foreign to his eyes. He didn't belong in the facility and neither did she.

She's halfway down the corridor when she hears their laughter subside, calling after her for a moment before giving up. Beverly keeps moving, through the G section of the building. She finds Omega after Omega, curled up shells who are childless, her heartache only increases the more faces she sees, the longer she is trapped there until she finds who she is looking for.

Tucked away at the very end, on the verge of the start of H, was Will Graham.

She sits in the middle seat of her sofa, her arms rest on her knees, a large glass of half drunk wine held between her hands, her eyes watch the flickering flames of her lit fireplace and travel along the mantelpiece, which holds all the photos of her nieces and her nephews, her sisters and her brother, babies and children and adults. Friends and families pinned all around when space on the mantle had ran out. There are even some of Will up there, peaked into corner, partly cropped to only reveal his daughter. They sit defiantly, daring any who visit the Omega's home to discover her biggest secret.

She takes a drink of her wine, she doesn't regret what she did, all those years ago, she'd never regret such a choice to help her friend. Her only friend, maybe. The hungry Alpha could come for her now, hunt her until her until she was dead, Beverly wouldn't shy away from her fate, she wouldn't give up her friend and her goddaughter to save herself. That had never been an option open for the Omega to take. She hears the car draw to a stop outside her open, the crunch of the fresh snow being crushed by the car's weight, she sighs and finishes the last few sips of her wine.

The engine is cut off and the sound of expensive boots on snow whisper outside, growing closer as he reached her unlocked front door. A simple door had never stopped the Ripper before. Beverly gets to her feet and walks to her kitchen, places her glass down on the marble top counter as his knuckles collide into a gentle intrusive knock on her door, she answers him without fear, invites his pleasant smile and pink cheeks inside her inviting home. He doesn't take his snow covered boots off, she doesn't ask him to as she leads him inside of her living-room, the snow melts from the heat of the fire and leaves puddles wherever he stands.

"What can I do for?" Beverly asks, falling back into her seat, stretching her arms along the arm and the back of the sofa as Hannibal stands by the fire, sharp shadows thrown over the slopes of his cheeks and his dark eyes, Beverly absently wonders if this is how he looks when taking the lives of his past victims, she wonders why she isn't scared by such a presence.

"Do you remember me? It's always bothered me, do you remember me from that day? With those dreadful Alphas." He says, looking away from the fire to Beverly now, polite curiosity on his face as he removed the leather gloves from his fingers, deliberate as Beverly thinks about his questions, wonders if there's any advantage to be gained from denying his familiarity.

"Yes, I didn't know who you were until we were introduced by Jack but yes, I remember you. You were the only one not laughing," Beverly allows, knowing the denial would do neither of them any good, he smiles and moves to sit on the arm of her small armchair, perched by her shelf of books, she'll miss those books, she acknowledges, she'll miss more than the books, she adds as Hannibal thinks. Puddles forming at his feet while he sits, one by the fireplace and one in front of the armchair, Beverly would be mentally reciting carpet cleaning company numbers if she planned on having any sort of future within these walls.

"I killed them, when I discovered that Will had gone before I could retrieve him, they were loitering in the hallways, laughing so stupidly, I killed them." Hannibal confesses, his tone echoing one of someone who is talking about a small inconvenience. Beverly wonders how anyone could ever refer to taking someone's life as an inconvenience.

"Did that make you feel better? Reassert just how much of an Alpha you were after losing the Omega you'd claimed as your own for a second time?" Beverly's words are dangerous daggers slowly piercing his skin, he sneers and growls at her, a slip in his composure she'd never managed to witness before, it's a moment of great pride for her. Smiling as she leans forwards, inviting him closer to her.

"I pity Will," Three deadly words that have his eyes tinged red, his nostrils flared, he's on his feet before her, big and threatening and deadly but Beverly basks in the danger. She'd wounded the famous Hannibal Lecter's pride, not only Hannibal Lecter's but the Ripper's too. Hannibal doesn't kill like she expects him to. Instead he stands and he paces and he regains his composure, snatching glaring looks at her as he does, she waits and wishes absently that she had more wine to wait with.

"Will liked dogs, didn't he?" It's a line to a topic she'd never imagined having with him, she nods as he turns his back on her and faces her mantelpiece, his body is distorted from the shadows of the fire he leans over, unnatural edges and slopes.

"You once had a dog yourself, did you not Ms Katz?" His fingers run along the edge of her mantelpiece, along the photos of friends and family. Stops when he reaches the photos, nestled at the back, hidden but still present, of her beloved dog and - Beverly understands.

"Yes," She replies, a sudden tone of stress to her voice now, the games slowly burning away to reveal the real motive of Hannibal's presence now. The Doctor picking up the photograph of her former dog, studying him for a moment, thoughtful. She gets up, unable to resist the urge to move, suddenly restless as paces until she grows tired of doing so, Hannibal continues

studying, undisturbed by her, she moves and holds onto the doorway leading from her living-room to her kitchen. Her grip tighter than usual, revealing her stress. Waiting, he had a skill for making people wait. The therapist in him, Beverly thinks absently.

"Hmm," He smiles and puts the photo back, adjusts it ever so slightly so it faces out towards the room better. His fingers run along the baby photo. Her stomach drops. She would protect them, regardless of what it meant for her. She would protect Will. She watches as he turns back to look at her, he's somehow softer now, Beverly knows it's her mind playing tricks on her, biology telling her that Alphas should be with their cubs regardless of circumstance or fact. A right of nature.

"What happened to him?" He looks at her, Beverly lifts her chin defiantly at him, waits for him to clarify who he means, waits and waits until he smiles and looks back at the dog photo, he asks his question again and she answers, too quickly, her lie too easily painted.

"He got out during a storm, I had left the door open and he got out and ran off," It's a fluent language foreign on her tongue, Hannibal doesn't respond and turns back to the photos, his fingers ready to touch whatever he pleases. Photos of Beverly's family. Siblings and parents, nephews and nieces. Friends from school and work, her breath hitches in her throat when he touches the one of Will's baby.

"Really?" It's an absent sort of thing that just floats out of his mouth, his eyes fixed to the photo of Will's daughter a few hours after her birth, Beverly had been careful to crop Will out of it before she put it up but now, with the Alpha unknowingly studying his daughter, she fears a simple crop wouldn't do to protect them from him.

"What do you want, Lecter? Only I do have things to do, like look for a new job." Her unease makes her nerve snap, she bites her words at him and draws his eye away from his child back to her, she fears more words will fall from her mouth without permission. Something in his eye threatens to make all her bravery shrivel up and disappear. She refuses to let it.

"Careless, wasn't it? To leave the door open? Especially during a storm," He's still talking about the dog, still focused on toying with her as he looks around the room again and then sighs, settles his eyes on Beverly who grows nervy with the weight. She wonders if she would be fast enough to escape him before he caught her. Would he snap her neck or would he simply end her life with a knife from her own kitchen? Maybe he would give her the option to end her own life? Her own hand in her own home.

"Anyone could have gotten in, *or out*." His voice is distant and thoughtful and knowing, looks at her pointedly. He knows, regardless of fine details, he knows the outline of what Beverly had done and that is all he would ever need to know. She smiles at him, without warmth or humour or disgust, she simply smiles an empty smile, stretch of skin and muscle before she turns her back on the deadly creature and enters her kitchen. Parched beyond death.

"I just want a drink, would you like one?" She knows he's following, near silent shoes on her carpet which she knows leaves a wet trail in their wake. They enter her kitchen, wood covered floor rather than carpet. She moves around with fluidity, collecting a glass from her cupboard for Hannibal and a bottle of wine from her fridge. She pours two glasses, her own

one from earlier now placed before her and pushes one towards the Alpha once done, the kitchen island all that lay between them now. Somehow the solidity of the object provided a comfort to her.

"It's not a mistake I plan to repeat, leaving doors unlocked when they shouldn't be." Beverly says, her lips around her glass as she takes a tentative sip and watches Hannibal as he does the same. He smiles once he has swallowed.

"Hmm, no. I suppose it won't be." The finality of his words pinch at her insides, makes her stomach squirm uneasily. Something so ominous. Deadly. She knows that he plans to kill her. She looks him in the eye as she takes another sip. The eye of death.

"Your dog disappeared around the same time as Will Graham did, did he not?" She chokes on her wine, too obvious to ignore, something glints in the Alpha's eye, Beverly carefully puts her glass back down on the counter and wipes at the corner of her mouth with the back of her hand, shaking her head with a bigger smile on her lips now. The skill of subtly that Hannibal had sculpted so excellently slowly being abandoned.

"I suppose the timings were close," Beverly allows, knowing it was pointless to continue dancing around confession but she was never any good at Confession.

"Yes, actually I was looking into it and it appears your dog and Will Graham both disappeared on the same night." His tone is tired of games, Beverly simply shrugs, drinks more of her wine as Hannibal sighs once again and looks around the kitchen, he will take his time to end her life, Beverly realises as she pours herself another glass of wine.

"Quite a coincidence." He says, his eyes scanning about the room, he smiles when he sees the cork board by the fridge full of more photos, various friends, various relatives. More of the Alpha's daughter. She watches and silently hopes there are no sneaking photos of Will. None of Miles. She'd never dared put one of him up.

"Quite," Beverly agrees, Hannibal steps closer to the board, his eyes scan, his eyes hover over his daughter, fascination glitters in his eye. A part of him recognises his kin.

"Gorgeous baby, not yours?" Beverly wants to burn the house down now, wants to grab her gun still sat in her car and shoot the Alpha dead. She wants more than anything to live past this night. She wants his memory burnt of the images of his daughter.

"No, my goddaughter," She refuses to beg, to weaken, to bow before him. He looks over his shoulder at her and smiles, almost as if he *knows*. He doesn't, there is something not quite shining in his eye yet. He sighs and runs a hand through his hair, adjusts his suit fractionally.

"What's her name?" Beverly doesn't answer, her tongue curls back to keep her name from being uttered into the room. Hannibal smiles once more, predatory, Beverly uses the moment she has when he turns his back to look over the board of photos again to recover the meat knife sitting in her sink from this morning. She narrowly has it in her hand, hidden by the counter, Hannibal turns back.

"Hmm, gorgeous," He's talking about the girl, his daughter, her goddaughter. She feels sick that he has seen her. Somehow it's a failure towards Will. She's tried of dancing, of his toying. She straightens her back and rolls her shoulders, like a solider readying themselves for battle.

"What is it you've come for, Hannibal? I doubt my missing dog and complimenting my goddaughter were your only chosen topics of conversation." Her grip on the knife tightens, she lifts her chin and readies herself for the oncoming storm.

"I simply want to know where Will Graham is." Cavernous words leave his lips, she feels her body fall down the jagged edges. Her first instinct is to lie to him, to prolong the inevitable for no reason other than it being a hardwired reaction. Hannibal senses this and speaks before she even opens her mouth.

"Before you lie to me, Ms Katz, and embarrass us both, please consider your goddaughter here, I'd *hate* for anything needless to occur for your foolish words." It's a threat that makes Beverly laugh, laugh despite the horror of her situation, suddenly the dynamic flips and it's her turn to deliver the threats, to dangle the Alpha's life right before him, right before delivering the first fatal stab of her knife, both literal and metaphorical.

"You wouldn't touch a hair on her head." Beverly holds her face with a smile, twisted and just as deadly as Hannibal's. The knife in her hand sears as if it burns to be used.

"Don't underestimate me," He warns, pointless words revealing how drastically he has misunderstood her. Beverly shakes her head and reveals what she has always sworn to keep hidden.

"I'm not, but why would you harm your own child?" Her words are delivered, like knives of ice delivered straight to his heart. He's frozen solid and Beverly uses the moment of his inaction to her advantage. She runs straight for him, her only obstacle before she can escape, uses the knife to escape his arms that reach for her instinctively, she delves the knife straight into his chest, missing his heart by a matter of inches, he lets out a guttural cry of shock and as he chokes on his own tongue, if only for a moment. A moment is all the Omega needs to escape.

She flees without a look back, the Alpha forced to stay in the kitchen, to apply the needed pressure to his chest and allow the Omega her escape, to chase her and capture her would be at the cost of his own life. He takes out his phone from his pocket and first calls and ambulance and then he calls Jack Crawford.

He prompts himself up against Beverly's kitchen doorway, struggles for each breath as he stares at the fallen photo laid on the floor before him. He snarls at the sight, his chest flares and his heart pounds despite the knife. His Alpha rattles in the confines of his cage deep within Hannibal's body.

His eyes are fixed to the picture just out of his reach.

He sees his daughter for the first time.

She is everything that Hannibal had ever imagined. She is everything that Hannibal had failed to imagine.

She looks like Will.

Will.

"Oh! Now, *that's* cheating!" I announce as the two monsters gang up against me, Miles proving himself a terrible influence on my daughter as they insist I'm the one who miscalculated how many points I deserve to be rewarded. They cry outrage against me when I do, insisting I'm wrong, I roll my eyes at them and sarcastically agree that I'm wrong as I climb to my feet from the living-room floor to answer the door which had just been rung, leaving both cheaters alone as I go.

I laughs my way down the hallway, the fact that a day like this even exists, where I'm able to laugh and enjoy my daughter with someone like Miles at my side still feeling like a surreal reality to me. My luck is not lost on me as I pull open the door.

Everything shatters around us. The Omega standing on my doorstep, the one who had saved me all those years ago, I know the moment our eyes meet, the moment I see the dried blood on her hands and the way she bites at her bottom lip, I know that my world has just shattered around us. Irreparable.

"Hey, Will." I find no words to respond with. There's no way to communicate with her.

"Beverly - ?" There are no words to follow, no greeting towards my oldest friend. Only the fear in my throat.

And Shattering Teacups Don't Come Back Together, Not Without A Price On Your Head.

Chapter Notes

> I'm sorry about tenses, I know it can be jarring for parts of a story to keep switching and I do try to keep everything coherent but sometimes I either don't realise I've done it or I forget to go back over parts I've written to edit it, I hope this chapter isn't too dreadful in that sense.
>
> Without Beta.

Flashback

The Omega paces around the small kitchen, restless and terrified. He looks at the beaten clock hanging above the doorway, Beverly would be back soon, he promises himself. Each time he repeats this to himself he ends up losing faith in each word a little more. He paces barefoot on the cold wood floor of Beverly's kitchen, he hand cradling the swollen underside of his belly while the other gripped the smooth marble surface of the kitchen island. Will refuses to acknowledge what was happening to him. What the painful aches of his belly and his back meant. What the liquid now trickling down the inside of his thighs meant. Will Graham adamantly refuses to believe that he's going into labour, not only going into labour but going into labour *alone.*

He walks through the house. His teeth bared in a muffled cry of agony while he holds the underside of his belly with his hand, a contraction much harder to ignore this time washes over him as he struggles through the dim hallway, Winston, Beverly's dog, comes whining at him, his nose pressing to Will's belly with human like concern, Will moans again as more shooting pains run along his spine, jolts of fire. He muffles his cry again, fearful that if he became too loud then one of Beverly's neighbours would come investigating, Will wouldn't be able to explain away his presence if he were to be seen.

He makes it to Beverly's living-room, he doesn't have the strength to keep himself on the sofa so he sinks himself down to the floor, resting his head against the seat of the sofa as he moans with each fresh roll of pain, he's close, he knows it somehow, his body tensing and the urge to *push* becoming hard to ignore with each passing second. He wants Beverly but knows that she won't be back in time for the birth. Will finally acknowledges that he'll have to deliver his baby alone.

As if he could read his thoughts, Winston enters the room, sniffing at Will as if to remind the Omega that he is not all alone, he feels a wave of gratitude towards the dog which is quickly

washed away when a strong contraction grips Will's body and mind away from any other thought or feeling that isn't pain and the desperation to get his baby *out* of him.

With the last of his strength Will strips of his ruined sweatpants and panties, discarding them somewhere besides him before he begins unbuttoning his shirt, he doesn't take it all the way off, simply opens it to prepare for when his baby has arrived, remembering how all the Omega birthing books had talked about how vital skin-to-skin contact is in the first few hours for baby and parents, how babies like to feel their mother's heartbeats, how they like the scent of their father to be close by, Will's heart lurches at that last piece of information. His baby would not experience the presence of their father and for that he feels as if he's stolen something. Stolen something from not only his baby but also Hannibal, as crazy as he knows it is to think like that - He pushes the thought away, instead he moves to push his thighs apart, facing his knees upwards and planting the soles of his feet firmly to the floor as he readied himself for his next contraction.

Will feeling as if the next contraction he would have would deliver his baby to him. He's not wrong.

He cries and bites at his lip to keep from screaming. Grips at the cushions of the sofa and cries into his hands as he begins pushing, following his bodies urges as it tells Will what to do, in subtle shifts and drags of his belly, he reaches a shaking hand between his thighs, feels for the baby's head and his heart lurches as he feels to make sure the umbilical has not wrapped itself around the baby's throat, once he's sure it hasn't he readies himself to push again. He breathes heavily waits for his body's signal for him to start his final push. Winston sits besides him now, as he has since joining Will, he nuzzles gently at his cheek as Will cries out again, barely muffled through gritted teeth as he pushes his baby from his body and into his awaiting hand, for what has taken so long the baby arrives in seconds. She is in Will's hands in seconds, he moves quickly as he puts her to his chest, rubs at her tiny chest and waits with a breaking heart for her to take her first breath.

Seconds tick by that feel like an eternity and then she begins crying. Loud intrusive sounds that are a sweet melody to Will's ears, he cries with her as he wipes the blood and fluids from her tiny body, rests her body on his own and basks in the joy his body brims with. Her cries quieten and Will latches her to his breast, his body slumps on the floor as he watches her feed, he's exhausted with limbs that refuse to move even an inch. He doesn't care. It was worth it, without a single doubt, to have the tiny baby now feeding from his breast, so entirely beautiful and perfect. Will hears the door open and shut, his daughter stirs but he comforts her, assuring her that the sound does not mean danger.

Winston doesn't move from his spot to investigate the sound, rather he remains fixed by Will, his attention solely focused to the tiny creature resting against Will's breast. Beverly's footsteps sound through the house, her keys rattle in her hand.

"Will - ?" She calls, appears in the doorway to the living-room just as Will's daughter begins crying from her voice.

"Fuck."

Will stares at Beverly. That's all he can make himself do as his mind feels as if it's racing a thousand miles a second. He can't seem to make himself understand why she's here, rather he can't make himself accept why she's here. If she's being honest Beverly can't process the fact she's on his doorstep either. The day had come that both had always dreaded and yet it didn't feel real somehow.

"Beverly?!" His voice fractures the space around them, brings both Omegas crashing back to the world as Beverly looks past Will and Will turns to find Miles leaning out of the living-room doorway, a surprised grin stretched across his face as he quickly walks up to them, his hand brushing the back of Will's shoulder as he passes him to hug Beverly, warm arms that surround her body as she looks at Will with panic over Miles' shoulder, they had so much to say to each other and now were unable with Miles with them.

Will's eyes mirror Beverly's, full of fear for what is to come.

"I didn't know you were coming!" Miles says pulling away from the Omega, grinning as he looks over her appearance, Beverly's silently thankful she had the thought to clean herself up on the plane over, nothing to reveal the circumstances that lead to her arrival on Will's doorstep.

"Yeah, uh," She swallows as her throat dries up and shakes her head a little, failing to come up with a reason as to why she would be here in the first place without announcing her arrival beforehand, nothing comes.

"Will's usually so anal when you're meant to be visiting too!" Miles continues, the Beta still unaware as to why the Omega is now stood on Will's doorstep without so much as a text's warning, he talks more but neither Omega in his company are listening, both fixed on figuring out how to get away before the day has ended. Doubtless Hannibal would be coming for them, once he had been through Beverly's home with Jack, once he'd recovered from the stabbing inflicted upon him from the Omega he had intended to make his next victim, they would find the paper chain Jack had been searching for for years and after they had discovered Alana, they would discover Will. There wasn't time to waste with excuses now.

Miles ushers Beverly inside once he's done ratting about his surprise to her visit, teases Will every so often for being so secretive, neither Omega really respond to him, no more than a forced smile or nod, he doesn't notice, more focused on getting Beverly inside and talking about why she's here, Will and Beverly are offered some rescue when Will's daughter calls Miles and Will back to the game they'd abandoned. Miles goes to get her, leaving Will and Beverly in the kitchen.

"We need to get out of here," Beverly says the second Miles has left, her voice urgent as she goes to check the garden, making sure there is no lingering scent of Hannibal in the air outside before she locks the door tightly shut, turning back to Will, who perches now on a seat at the breakfast table, his face crumbling as he hides in his hands.

"How did he find out?" His voice is a fracture of what it was, Beverly goes to his side, her hands soft as she rests it comfortingly against the nape of his neck, moving her arm around him to hold him warmly. She starts retelling the events that had unfolded only a few days earlier.

Flashback

"Oh, she's gorgeous, Will!" Beverly coos quietly to Will as she peers over the Omega's shoulder down at the tiny newborn sleeping peacefully in his arms. They'd managed to get Will upstairs since Beverly had returned home, she'd made sure that both Will and his yet-to-be-named daughter were healthy and safe. She'd taken careful time to clean up the stains of his birth from Will's body before helping him changing into an adult diaper and loose cotton pants and shirt, easily removed for breastfeeding. She'd thought of, or had tried to at least, think of everything Will might need with him before leaving him upstairs to clean up the mess of her living-room, starting with the blood stains on her floor. She uses as much bleach and cleaning product as she dares to try to cover both the smell of blood and the distinct smell a birth brought with it along with the scent of Will and the baby.

Once satisfied with the state of her living-room, Beverly went back upstairs to check on Will, finding him where she left him in her own bedroom tucked safely in her bed, the baby now feeding in his arms rather than asleep.

"God, Will, she's so gorgeous," Beverly says, her voice a soft whisper as she climbs into bed besides him, wrapping her arms around her fellow Omega as they both peer down and grin at the few hours old girl in his arms, he nods his head in silent agreement, his fingers brushing over her tiny cheek as he does, awed by her very existence.

"Thank you," He murmurs, looking at Beverly now, his eyes intense and glassy with tears, she smiles and shakes her head, wiping the tears from his eyes as she does with the pads of her thumbs, a motherly gesture that reminds Will of his since passed mother, he wishes she was here to meet her granddaughter.

"I'm sorry I wasn't here with you." Beverly says as Will rests his head against her shoulder, slowly letting the exhaustion of his day take over him as his daughter feeds from his breast, rhythmic in her sucking as Beverly lets her fingers caress his soft curls, massaging them as he shakes his head at her words.

"Don't be, you're here now and that's all that matters to me." He says honestly, and how could he be upset with her? After everything Beverly had done for him, to keep him and his daughter safe? He'd forever be in her debt.

"What are you going to name her?" Beverly asks the dreaded question, both of them once again gazing at the girl in his arms, captivated by her beauty as Will smiles and thinks, he has several names in his head before she had arrived today but now that she lays in his arms none but one felt like the right choice now. If he's honest with himself, there's only ever been one possible name from the start of all of this.

"I don't know? I have one name but I don't think I can give it to her - " He admits, not quite able to bring himself to say it out loud yet, he needs to be sure. Beverly laughs softly besides him, an amused and teasing glint to her eye as she brushes her thumb along Will's daughter's cheek, a feather light weight.

"Well, I'm honoured of course! Like there was any other name to pick from," Beverly's meaning is not lost on the tired Omega who laughs at his friend with a shaking head, only she could make Will joke at such a tender moment of his life.

"Piss off, I'm not naming my daughter after her godmother. I'd be creating a monster!" He says affectionately, though they both know it's true, Will knowing full well that one Beverly would be more than enough in the world, not that it meant he didn't have other plans for her. He grins then, looking over at her with his own glint in his eye. She narrows her eyes with suspicion.

"Godmother?" Will offers, his tone questioning as if Beverly would refuse, she pouts and makes a show of acting like she's considering it, it only makes Will laugh more so much so that he nearly jostles his daughter, he quickly ceases and readjusts her, careful that she does not begin crying as he does.

"If you don't have anything else on, of course?" Will adds, mock seriousness in his tone as Beverly lets out a muted dramatic sight and nods her head with agreement.

"I'll have to check my schedule but I might be able to sort something out," She agrees airily moving back to grin down at her goddaughter, kissing her head carefully as she reintroduces herself to the baby with her new title, much to Will's amusement.

"Hey baby girl, I'm your godmother, Beverly." She says, grinning as Will gently takes her off of his nipple once she's done eating, she yawns and Beverly is quick to grab her phone and get a photo of the moment, showing Will his daughter's first yawn immortalised.

"Hey pancake." Beverly coos, taking more photos now that the temptation had been brought to her attention, even getting some of Will in them as well, though she hides these away lest someone should accidentally see if they looked through her phone.

"Now we just need to get you a name - " Beverly says as she and Will look over the now sleeping baby against his chest, Will smiles and continues to keep her chosen name a secret, he'd sleep on it first, despite knowing it wouldn't change his mind. It's a perfect moment to the end of their day and Will's slowly drifting off to sleep when the moment is shattered into horror.

The doorbell rings.

"Are you expecting someone?" Will asks, suddenly on edge as Beverly begins climbing from the bed, shaking her head as she grabs her nightgown to wrap around herself, refusing to panic as she ties her hair back.

"Fuck," Will breathes out in a hiss, moving to put the baby in her Moses basket besides the bed, wincing as he does from the pain of his body, everything catching up to him now that the bubble of his daughter had been burst.

"It's okay, I'll sort it out. You're safe, I promise." Beverly promises as she heads towards the bedroom door, taking in the sight of Will and the baby before heading outside of the room,

making sure to close the door before heading down her stairs towards the front door, steeling herself for whoever may stand on the other side.

Will.

I get up from my chair once Beverly's finished retelling me the events that had unfolded in her home a few days earlier, my movements stiff and muted as I walk to the cupboard containing the wineglasses. Reaching inside for one as Beverly silently watches me from across the room, still perches on her knee by the chair I had just sat at, I move for the fridge and retrieve the bottle of wine that had been opened last night, pouring myself a large glassful before I turn back to face Beverly, leaning my weight against the count behind me.

"D'you think they'll have found Alana already?" I ask, taking a sip of the cool liquid as she chews her bottom lip and thinks before she shakes her head, moving to sit on the seat I had formerly occupied as she does, I sigh and look into my drink, gazing at the red liquid as I roll my glass, watching the wine swirl up against the side of the glass from within. I feel stripped of emotion.

"I called her after I'd left - She knew what to do." Beverly says, her tone quiet and careful, careful to avoid mention of *him.* Of Hannibal. My stomach drops at the possibility that he may be dead now, I refuse to believe it, refuse to accept that he may be dead and I didn't feel anything. That's not how Mated - I rolls my shoulders and clear my throat, distancing myself from the trail of thought as I do.

"That's something, I suppose," I utter into my glass, taking another drink as Beverly remains silent in her chair. I know she wants to say more, ask questions, plan and remind me of the urgency that surrounds us leaving this place as soon as possible. She restrains herself from doing so and for that I am thankful, thankful that she understands that I need time before I can dive straight back into running.

"How's Pancake?" She asks, I smirk into my glass and look at her defiant grin meeting me, she hates the name I picked for my daughter, never directly calling her it, rather the nickname she had given her hours after her birth. *Pancake.* I shake my head and shrug.

"Happy, settled, Miles is good for her." I say, well practiced words that I say every time she asks, a shorthand between us, Beverly smiles and gets up from her chair, stretching as she goes.

"I'm gonna go say hi, you should get packing. Essentials only." She adds, as if I haven't been prepared for this day to come since the very moment we arrived in this house, I nod along as she leaves, I listen to her revealing herself to Pancake, squeals of joy, laughter and lots of loud chattering. My anxiety settles a little at the knowledge that she's at least happy, blissfully unaware of the oncoming storm. The way it should be. I down the last of my drink and go upstairs to start packing.

Stitches Above The Heart Do Not Account For The Scars Along My Skin.

Chapter Notes

> I feel like this is a little messier than the previous chapters but I can't fix it anymore, it'll just have to do!
>
> Without Beta.

He comes round to bright lights and faint beeping sounds of machines. A sharp pain in his chest several inches to the left of his heart. He looks around himself, there are no handcuffs around his wrists and nor is there a guard waiting outside his room. He has yet to be caught. The events that had lead him to the bed he currently lay in come back to him like raindrops against a roof. Once all the facts, or as many as he was aware of before, have been collected and sifted through he feels marginally calmer. Noting that the machine monitoring his heart was beating at a normal rate. He watches the monitors of the machines he's hooked up to. Watches his heart rate and temperature and several other things that his mind is still too fogged up to remember the name or purpose of. These things will come back to him later, when he has time to make himself remember but right now they are minor details in an already crowded room.

He feels like he's been awake for seconds and hours all at once, he's unsure of how much time has passed before Jack Crawford comes knocking at his hospital room door. Regardless of time or situation Hannibal feels like he's been left waiting far too long for the Alpha to finally arrive, but then again much like Hannibal, Jack usually ran on his own time and not to someone else's.

"The doctor said it would be okay to come?" He says, stopping at the end of Hannibal's bed, leaving no choice to refuse his company as he was already inside the fellow Alpha's room, Hannibal smiles and swallows, he hadn't realised his throat was so dry, lifts a heavy arm and near numb fingers to the chair by his bed for Jack to take, an offering of politeness that would take death to keep Hannibal from performing.

"Of course, an old friend with a familiar face is always welcome," He says, his voice hoarse as Jack smiles "Sit, please," Hannibal invites, wincing a little as he moves to sit up a little more in the bed, Jack dutifully taking the offered seat, setting his leather gloves and scarf down on the side table that was traditionally full of flowers but here it was empty, Hannibal not having many people in his life who would send him flowers without personally delivering them. Perhaps they were simply waiting for Hannibal to wake up? It was a possibility. He didn't dwell on the possibility. Flowers and gestures were not of his concern now.

"Thank you," Jack says once he's settled into the seat, looking round the sterile hospital room for several moments before his eyes settle back on Hannibal, who looks so unlike his usually groomed and stoic self. Stubble around his chin and bags beneath his eyes. "I sense you did not just come to wish me well," Hannibal says, as if reading Jack's thoughts with his usual amused smile that Jack returns with a slight smudge of sadness, an act that is just as equally unlike him as the dishevelment is to Hannibal. "Your senses remain as sharp as ever," Jack concedes with a thoughtful angle of his head. Hannibal simply smiles.

"Hmm, a familiarity in a changing storm is never a bad thing," Hannibal says, coughing and then wincing from the pain the movement causes his body. He shrugs off Jack's offer of help and moves carefully for the water sitting besides him, tenderly pouring himself a glass while Jack remains thoughtful and silent besides him. "What a storm this has become," He admits, chancing a glance at Hannibal as the fellow Alpha takes a drink of the water, sighing as it begins soothing his pained throat.

"No longer contained by it's teacup, I fear," Hannibal admits, his tongue trailing lightly along his bottom lip as he stares at the plastic cup in his hands, glancing a look at Jack who looks at him with troubled eyes. Hannibal wonders what the Alpha may be thinking now. What had they discovered since he'd been out? New leads to Will? Will and *his* - His chest flares painfully at the thought of his daughter. His child that up until recently had been a vague imagination, a painful hope that Hannibal had so rarely allowed himself to think of. But now, now all he could think about was the child in the photo. "What happened, Hannibal?" His voice is an unwelcome intrusion to his thoughts, so much so that Hannibal nearly growls at him with a twisted hatred when Jack speaks. Not that he had any idea what Hannibal may possibly be thinking of. Or perhaps he did and he was simply here to confirm his suspicions.

"There are many things I can imagine Beverly capable of," Jack begins, his brows furrowed and his posture stiff, revealing what Hannibal had failed to discover. Hannibal wonders how such an Alpha could warrant so much respect when his mind was so far behind the rest. "But this? I fail to comprehend how such events could have taken shape," Jack says, his voice thick with sorrow that Hannibal is sure can't be as sincere as the Alpha would like to make out it is. "For her actions to have ended in this way," *This way,* Hannibal thinks, referring to his hospitalisation, is a failure to comprehend all the facts.

"People's natures are not always as fixed as we believe them to be, Jack." Hannibal says simply, a soft grunt following as he reaches to place his cup on the table that is empty of flowers, Jack looks at him seriously then, a deep furrow between his brows, his lips a stern line that give nothing away. "A few inches and you would not be here, Hannibal," Jack says, his voice so much more troubled by the fact than Hannibal would have considered possible, though Hannibal doubts that Jack is troubled by the idea of his no longer being alive but rather than Hannibal would have died with some sort of clue that Jack himself had not yet come to know. That, Hannibal confirms for himself, is why Jack has come to see him.

"A few inches are what saved my life as much as they could have taken it." Hannibal replies, laying his head back against the pillows and concentrating on the pain in his chest that comes from each breath that he takes, he suspects the pain will last longer than the stitches in his skin. Jack sighs again besides Hannibal, draws in all the information he has, exhales all the

pieces that he has yet to grasp. "Why did you go, Hannibal?" The question is the first step to the right direction.

"To Beverly's?" Jack nods, still as stern as he was, Hannibal licks his lips and shrugs a shoulder, his body cries with pain at the action, he does not reveal this pain. "After our conversation, things did not sit well with me and I felt that going to talk to her would settle my feelings," Hannibal smiles a little, the kind of smile one gives when they made an easily avoidable mistake, sheepish and quite unlike himself. "Clearly, I underestimated the situation," There's a flash in Jack's eye then, something bubbling away that is so close to overflowing that Hannibal almost feels as if he should take a step back to avoid the overflow.

"That's an understatement." Jack says an edge of twisted humour to his voice. "What do you know about Dr. Alana Bloom." It's a change of pace that takes Hannibal by surprise. A revelation that maybe Hannibal hadn't been the only one snooping in awkward places.

Flashback

The Omega creeps down the stairs of her home, the strong smell of bleach burns her nose as she passes the room that had been stained with Will's blood and afterbirth only hours earlier, she'd scrubbed and stripped the room of anything that smelt of Will until only bleach and disinfectant could be smelt, despite this though she felt anxious that the smell of Will continued to linger in the air. She opens the door of her home before the doorbell could ring again. As she approaches the threshold of her home she could tell that there were no flashing lights or police cars waiting on the other side, no Jack with his gun out and positioned in her face, no-one to take away what she'd tried to protect, rather there is only Alana waiting for her when she opens the door.

Alana dressed in clothes unlike the ones she usually wore, discreet black hoodie and trainers that looked a size too big and baggy trousers that had obviously never seen daylight before. Beverly is unsure of what the sight means but before she can question her, Alana speaks, her voice is hushed as if raising it even slightly would cause too much attention. "I need to speak to you," Her voice is quiet and she looks nervously round her shoulder as if she'd been followed, Beverly catches onto her anxiety and can't help but to look around with her. "Uh - ?" She's unsure of what letting Alana would lead to, if it would lead to anything, that's stupid, Beverly thinks. Of course it would lead to something. "I know you helped Will," It's a revelation that could mean anything. Helped him on a test, helped him with work, helped him escape, helping him hide. Beverly is left with no choice but to let her in.

Stands aside as she allows Alana inside of her home, careful to guide her down the hallway towards the kitchen, silently cringing at the scent of bleach as they pass her shut living-room door. "I'm not sure what you mean about Will," Beverly says, starting the game of chicken up again, because that's what Alana had started by coming to her, who would reveal what they knew before the other. Beverly was determined to win. To ultimately protect Will and his daughter who were only a few feet above where they stood now. Alana paces the kitchen before she settles on standing across the room, she takes her hood down, after some private assessment of her surroundings, perhaps she thought Beverly was harboring more than just Will. "Let's not start with lies, Beverly. I know." She says, her words firm and undeniable.

Beverly simply shuts them inside of the kitchen and discreetly eyes the drawer hiding her gun. "I'm not sure what it is I can do for you then," Beverly admits, leaning her back against the solid wood.

"I'm not here to turn him in, I'm here to try to protect him," Despite the feeling that Alana is telling the truth, Beverly remains silent, although her stomach drops at the idea of Will being returned to Jack's watch, where he would be far less safe than in Beverly's own bedroom. "I think it's best you leave," Beverly says, with no intention of letting Alana leave until she was sure that the woman was not about to go running to Jack, or worst - But she does not think about the latter option. "Beverly, I know he's here," Her heart skips a beat as she stares at Alana, drawn from her thoughts as she stares at Alana. "I don't know what you're talking about." It's a lie, point and a waste of breath but Beverly can't simply trust her just because Alana wants her to.

Trusting people was not how Beverly had managed to keep Will safe, was not how she would continue to keep him safe. Even if she wanted to trust Alana, even if she wanted to believe that Alana coming to her rather than going to Jack was a genuine choice of alliance. Wanted to believe Alana had come to her in as discreet a manner as she could manage showed that she did not want Will turned in but rather wanted him to remain hidden. Beverly wants to believe Alana's being honest.

"I know you're the one who got him out, the one who stole my ID to do so," Beverly is left speechless by Alana's confession, she can't deny any of it and yet she tries, for the sake of Will, for the possibility that Alana will still leave without whatever she wants. "I don't know what you think you know, Alana, but I assure you that you have been grossly misinformed." Beverly says, watches as Alana grows more frustrated, conflicted until her face clears and she's resolved, Beverly doesn't know what about. "Do you know who Hannibal Lecter is?" It's a frank question, yes or no. Beverly's stomach drops as if a penny drops between them. She acts without a single second thought, moves before Alana has the chance to react. Beverly pulls open the kitchen drawer and withdraws her gun, holds it up and points it directly to Alana, Alana who doesn't look scared, rather she looks pridefully at the gun ready to take her life. "I really don't have time for dramatics, Beverly. I take it you know who he is? To Will?" Beverly nods her head stiffly, Will had told her in the time he'd been with her all about Hannibal Lecter and every day she had not found him and placed a bullet between his eyes had been a commendation to the Omega.

"Believe me, there is nothing dramatic about my holding this gun," Beverly says lowly, her voice colder now as she held it steady and ready to put a bullet in Alana's head should she give her the slightest reason to do so, even then maybe she would simply do so anyway. "Did he come with you? Are you just the diversion, Alana?" Beverly asks, a twist in her voice as she speaks, resists the desire to go check on Will, refusing to officially reveal him to Alana who remains stood in front of her. "I would never do that to him." The desire to believe her words fill Beverly's head but she keeps from believing, keeps the gun up and her guard up. "Look, you know what kind of man Hannibal is." Alana says, taking a step forward, Beverly cocks the gun and she immediately retreats, raising her hands in surrender.

"The kind of man he is, you need, *have to*, understand, Beverly. Hannibal is not the kind of Alpha to let *something* go easily, especially the Omega he *Bonded* with!" Her voice urges

Beverly to listen, even if it is futile, her voice verges on pleading, Beverly puts the safety back on her gun. "How do you know what type of man, Hannibal Lecter is?" Beverly asks, lowering her gun as Alana lets out a breath of relief and carefully puts her hands on the counter stood between the two woman, she looks shaken and guilty.

"I've known him a long time, Beverly, a lot longer than anyone really. Everything I have now, I owe to that man." She doesn't offer any more elaboration and Beverly doesn't ask her for more, filling in the blanks that her words leave with her own version of events. There had always been rumours about Alana and her private life in the lecture halls when she wasn't in, about the tragic incident concerning her brother-in-law Mason Verger. About her wife, Margot Verger, about their son. There were inconsistencies about it all that Beverly and Will had always put down to gossip but maybe the inaccuracies were more down to Hannibal? The silence between them cracks when the baby upstairs starts crying, quiet and muffled but no less present. Alana immediately moves towards the door and Beverly has her gun on her in a second. Safety off, inches from her face.

"Does Hannibal know you're here?" Beverly asks, her voice as cold as ice and her hands the steadiest Alana had ever seen wrapped around a gun, the older woman shakes her head and slowly moves an inch from the gun. "If he did, we'd already be dead." Beverly believes her with a doubt, if the man discovered them then the two of them would be dead without question, Hannibal may even kill Will if he discovered that they had tried to keep his own child from him. The thought isn't bear dwelling on and before Beverly is given the opportunity to do so, the muffled cries stop, goes quiet and then there's footsteps creaking down the stairs and Will's voice calls hesitantly for Beverly, whose fingers grip her gun tighter as Alana's fingers threaten to reach for the door handle of the kitchen door at the sound of his voice, knowing the consequence if she acted upon the urge. She keeps still and waits for Beverly to make the first move.

Alana.

"Yeah, that's it!" Margot encourages Morgan as I watch the two of them sitting at the piano, Margot slowly mentoring Morgan into an equally skilled pianist, his grin mirroring hers as he copies the careful keys she had laid out for him to follow, the melody filling the large music room as he does. Each key ringing out in crisp beauty as my phone on the coffee table begins ringing, both looking over their shoulders at me to give me the same scornful look that I find myself adoring so much more than they would ever know, smiling sheepishly as I reach to answer it and usher away whoever it was on the other side, Morgan being given leave as I move to pick it up, running off as soon as he's allowed.

"Hello?" I run my fingers over the arm of the sofa I sit in while Margot begins playing a delicate melody to me, it had taken months to get her to play again after Mason's passing, even longer to get her out and riding again, the only thing that seemed to get her back on the back of her stallion was Morgan's arrival, she insisted the moment he was passed into her arms that he would be just as brilliant at riding as she is, she wasn't wrong.

"Get out." The call lasts all of two seconds, but it breaks everything ever created in those two simple seconds. The weight of my world slips and crushes everything around its orbit. I drop

my phone to the floor, everything has slowed now, all is left is Margot playing at the piano and the echoes of Morgan's laughter, now a phantom note that mocks me with its growing distance. Everything feels like its been shattered and smashed to a million fine pieces. Her voice will never be heard by me ever again. The warning Beverly Katz had always promised to send. I'm on my feet in seconds, my phone left in my wake on the floor as I run to Margot, grabbing her and dragging her up to her feet, the shock of my movements send her fingers flying over the wrong keys of the piano. "Alana!" It doesn't sound like her but I take her hand and take her from the room. Morgan. I needed to get Morgan.

I let go of her hand as I begin calling for him, running through the hallway and down the winding staircase of the elaborate home we'd built together, built out of the hellish shadows that would once again consume each sweeping wall like it had done all those years ago. "Fuck." I hiss almost breathless with fear as I find his room empty, toys strewn everywhere freshly played with, the phantom of his laughter still in the air, but he is no longer here. He is somewhere else, Margot is behind me, confused and growing angry and scared.

"Morgan?" I yell through the house that was no longer our home. I'm moving fast through the hallways and down the stairs, I hear his laughter again, as if it mocks me more now. *"Morgan?"* My voice is more desperate and then suddenly I find him, he's outside, laughing and joking as he plays with the dogs who bark and run playfully with him. I catch sight of Margot stood besides me, her face calms when she sees he is okay but I know without having to ask that she knows now what has happened. Margot goes and takes his hand and we walk back inside, a facade of calm to protect him, I follow the two but do not follow them upstairs where Margot will no doubt begin packing, rather I go to my study. I go to put into action what we'd always prepared for.

The wrath of Hannibal Lecter.

While The Salt Soaks Your Lungs, I Will Be There To Cradle Your Throat With The Bones Of My Fingers.

Chapter Notes

Hope everyone enjoys, I don't know if this is a really predictable or really tense chapter, lemme know please!

Without Beta.

Flashback

His voice calls softly through the house, careful not to upset the baby in his arms, he winces with each step he takes, pain from his daughter's birth that had taken place only hours earlier fresh in his body and mind. *"Beverly?"* He knocks carefully on the kitchen door, he doesn't know what to do, doesn't know if Beverly's okay or if something's happened, anxiety thrums lowly in the back of his mind, the door is pulled open and Will is greeted with the sight of Alana Bloom in the doorway with Beverly besides her, a gun in Beverly's hand, pressed to Alana's temple. His stomach drops. Fear prickles along the raised hairs on the back of his neck. He stares at Beverly and the gun, he's not sure how much time passes before he's pulled from his thoughts back to what is happening in front of him.

"God help us," Her voice is a hopeless whisper, Will had been staring at Beverly and at the gun but now he was staring at Alana whose eyes had fallen and stayed on his daughter cradled protectively to his chest. Alana's eyes are round and full of sorrow as she stares. Will only sees her as a threat in this moment, an unknown factor, he tales a step back from her, from Beverly, as if the new space will protect him and his child from the scene laid out before him. Shields his daughter from Alana's line of sight when she stares at the tiny girl. "Tell me that is not Lecter's child, Will?" Her voice verges on terrified, a desperate prayer. He's confused as to how she knew, if Beverly would reveal something so precious and closely guarded, one look to his friend and he knew it hadn't been her. He wonders if Jack is here, if Hannibal had been caught, if Alana had brought Hannibal with her. He stands his ground despite his desire to run and hide. To protect his daughter from the possible dangers Alana brought with her.

"How do you know about Hannibal?" His name burns Will's tongue as he says it, too many twisted emotions are attached to the name, he can't bring himself to think about each one, to try to decipher the poisonous web of feelings, rather he watches the gun pressed to Alana's temple and wonders if he should tell Beverly to let it go, knows that it would be a mistake to do so the second he considers it. "Will, you have to get out. I thought we had more time but if *that's* his child - You *have* to leave." Her voice trembles with fear, wide eyes of terror as each second ticked by, she wasn't scared of the gun against her head, with the safety off and

Beverly's finger against the trigger, waiting for a reason *or an excuse* to be given so she could *press* and release what would end Alana's life in a matter of seconds. She was only scared of the baby in Will's arms, innocent and hours old. Alana looks at her as if she were a nuclear bomb ready to detonate and destroy not only the three people around her but the billions of unseen lives as well. Will only held her closer at the knowledge.

"Why? Is *he* here with you?" Will asks, almost defiant as he does, refusing to be fearful should Alana nod her head, should the Alpha that had taken and given Will so much appear from the shadows. "I couldn't do that to you," Alana says softly. There's a *'but'* coming, Will feels its presence looming over his head like grey clouds that hide away the sun on warm summer days, take away the warmth and make them cold. "But he knows you're out there, Will. He's never going to stop until he has you again, and if he succeeds, you won't get away." There's no doubt between them that Alana is speaking the truth. Omegas leaving their Alphas permanently was a rare occurrence, Omegas leaving Alphas they were Bonded to was nearly unheard of and Omegas leaving Alphas they shared children with was virtually impossible, Will knew better than any that if Hannibal were to see him again that he would not get away from the Alpha.

"Beverly, put the gun away," Will says softly to his friend, her eyes flickering to meet his before letting out a heavy sigh and putting the safety back on her gun, removing it from Alana's temple and placing it down on the counter behind her. Alana changes very little once the gun is removed, only that her shoulders seem to relax and maybe she doesn't stand so ridged anymore. "What do you suggest I do? Doubtless you're here for a reason." Will asks, moving to sit at the breakfast table, wincing with pain as he does, Beverly goes to help him. "How old is it?" Alana asks, her tone clinical as she keeps her distance from Will, who smiles a little tensely at Alana's choice of *'it.'*

"She's only a couple of hours old." He admits, frowning distractedly when she starts fussing in his arms, cooing to her gently and moving to help her latch on to the nipple she's searching out through instinct. Alana's taken aback, stares at the baby and thinks of her own son at home, all that is threatened by Hannibal. The stench of bleach is explained, Beverly's protectiveness is explained. The situation had changed. There is no way that Will could flee tonight. "She," Alana echoes with a slight nod of her head and a small smile across her lips. She was no longer a factor easily dismissed or pushed away. "Does she have a name?" Alana asks, her voice softened towards the Omega.

"I've got an idea, still deciding. Beverly likes Pancake." Will says, a small smile towards Beverly who smiles back, soft and unguarded, the gift a baby brings to those who know better than to smile in such a way. "How long till he finds me, Alana? If I stay here, how long?" His voice is as light as it was only seconds ago but there is a reality in his eye that he knows he cannot escape what is coming for him, not unless he fled what he knew for somewhere else. Alana looks at the baby in his arms and then up at Will's face. "If you stay here, he'll find you in weeks, with or without my help.

"Why are you here, Alana? *Really,* why are you here?" Beverly asks, her voice cuts between any tenderness Alana and Will were beginning to feel, brings back the urgency of their situation that goes beyond feeding the baby nestled against Will's chest, beyond their own lives but to the ones of their families, of their own loved ones outside of this room.

"Because I owe a debt," She says, raising her chin defiantly as she looks to Beverly, as if the woman hadn't just held a gun to her temple. "To who?" Will asks, his daughter fussing in his arms, wanting quiet or wanting Will's breast or maybe dark? Will had yet to discover what all her different little noises meant. "That doesn't matter now, the price to pay is the same no matter who pays it," Alana says, her eyes once again on the baby in Will's arms, she's smiling a watery regretful smile that makes Will's heart lurch. "What does that mean?" Her voice is the cold reality pressing around them, Alana and Will turning to face Beverly. "It means I'm going to get you away," Alana tuns back to Will and her words take both Omegas aback. "Away, where?" Beverly takes a step to stand between Alana and Will, her hand reaching to his arm as Alana looks as if she's battling a whole war separate from theirs. "Far enough that Hannibal won't find you, and if he does it won't be without a fight," Alana's word are followed by a phone buzzing instantly making the baby cry in Will's arms as Alana fishes it out of her pocket to answer.

Her face contorts into a dozen different expressions as she responds to the message received, Will shushing his daughter. "I need to go," It's final and Will moves to allow her past. "I'll text Beverly when I can meet you and we'll work from there," Alana says as they travel down the hall towards the front door, Will's heart pounds as he stays out of sight as Beverly opens the door to allow Alana to leave. "Alana?" Her name tumbles from his lips without realising he planned to call her. "Will?" She stands on the doorstep, teetering on the inside and out, Will smiles and adjusts the baby in his arms. "Her name's Mischa." It's like two weights work simultaneously within him, one falls deeper and tugs at his soul and the other lifts and sours into the depths of heaven high above, Alana smiles. "She's beautiful."

Two suitcases, packed and ready for collection, they're stored in the cupboard underneath the stairs, Miles never thought to ask about them, Will never thought up an excuse about them. They have fake passports inside them, for Will and his daughter. There is several thousand in cash in various currencies. Will had planned for the eventuality of being found, he hadn't accounted for Miles, for Miles ever *existing* in his life, ever *staying* in his life. Beverly doesn't ask what Will plans to tell him, just assumes that he has a plan. He doesn't. Beverly does, it involves the body bag in the boot of her car and the shovel in Will's utility closet.

"Ready?" She's in the bedroom doorway, the dogs barking at her feet as they come in and out around her, while they may know Beverly, the change in energy she always brought with her unsettles them enough not to trust her alone around Will, which she always found ironic, Winston of course was always elated to have both Beverly and Will around him. "Almost. What are you planning to do with the dogs?" He hadn't let himself think about it but now, with all the wagging tails around him, he couldn't think to leave them behind. "A car will come pick them up and take them to an undisclosed location, I'll pick them up from the location and they'll be back with you by tomorrow night." Beverly says, because the dogs weren't just something Will had become fond of they were one of the last defenses Beverly had made sure Will had. Guard dogs dressed up as fluffy goofballs.

"You've really thought everything out." Will smiles as he grabs a few things from the nightstand drawer, Beverly smiles back and bows modestly and theatricality and then when she catches sight of the photo of Will and Miles on the nightstand she frowns a little, they have to talk about *him. "Almost,"* It puts a heavy weight in his stomach at the

acknowledgement. "What're you gonna do?" Will asks, because even if Beverly didn't plan for Miles he knows that she's already come up with one. The look on the face is almost enough to send a shiver down his spine and he *knows* without asking *exactly* what Beverly's planning on doing. They don't say anything more. Will keeps packing and Beverly goes and sits on his bed, her legs crossed with Winston panting happily besides her. Her gun sat in front of her, Will had his own tucked away in the room, behind the closet, *just in case*.

"I'll do it when you and Pancake are in the car," Beverly says when Will's almost done and the room is nearly back in order, as if he hadn't taken anything out of it's place, he hates the pang in his chest when she speaks, when she reduces Miles to a simple *it,* a problem to be dealt with. He wishes he'd never met the man. "Okay," Is all he can manage to make himself say, because what else is there? They can't let him go, not for Hannibal to find. Will couldn't allow himself to let someone face the fate of Hannibal, especially Miles. The room lapses into silence, heavy and suffocating and the feeling only increases when the Beta's voice echoes up from where he is downstairs. "Okay! Okay! I'm just gonna see what mummy's up to!" His voice calls, drawing closer with each word, sending sharp daggers of guilt through Will's body, his voice is too alive, vibrant and happy for a man about to be murdered. Will catches sight of Beverly moving her gun casually from sight, his attention back on Miles when he appears in the bedroom doorway, his arms reaching to sprawl out around the door frame as he grins at Will and Beverly. It's an eerie expression to look at. Will climbs to his feet, steps in front of the suitcase he had been kneeling in front of as Miles looks between him and Beverly with a slowly growing suspicious expression.

"Have I just walked in on some seriously juicy chat?" He asks, his grin too bright and lively for Will to bare as Beverly forces a smile in response but no words, even Beverly could not detach all warmth for the Beta in a matter of moments. "What? Why are you two acting so suspect?" Miles asks as Will stands in front of him, allows Miles to wrap his arms around the Omega's shoulders, Will inhales deeply against Miles' chest, tries to commit the icy snow and burnt fire wood smell that Miles always managed to carry around with him in his clothes. "Uh? You're the one whose come spying!" Beverly teases, regaining her natural bounce now as Miles lets out a chuckle that vibrates in his chest, Will places his hand over the hum. He wants to cry but not out of heartbreak but guilt. "God, did someone just *die?"* It's like a punch to Will's gut when Miles says the words, ill fated and taunting, he even catches sight of Beverly's reactionary flinch, though Miles remains oblivious as he's caught sight of the suitcase now. "Whose suitcase is that?" He asks, kissing the crown of Will's head before detaching himself from the Omega and walking over to crouch in front of the suitcase, examining the contents before looking over his shoulder at Beverly and Will, both meeting him with the same guilty face.

"Will, what's going on? Why have you packed your clothes and - Mischa's passport?" His voice drifts to confusion, his expression perplexed as he looks at the passport and the clothes but all Will can think is to be thankful that the passport in Miles' hand is Mischa's *original* and not one of the fake ones buried beneath the clothes in the lining of the suitcase. "Uh - ?" Will looks to Beverly for assistance that doesn't involve her reaching for her now hidden gun. "It's my fault," Beverly says quickly, drawing Miles' attention off of Will and onto her. "Beverly - ?" She doesn't allow him time to say anything more. "I arranged it, all of it, Will didn't realise I'd gone ahead and booked it all!" She starts quickly, even Will was confused now.

"He said maybe and I just took that as a yes! Anyway, it's all nonrefundable and everything's been paid for," She gets up and pulls out her phone, Will notices that a part of the screen has been cracked, a new wave of guilt floods him as he considers the possibility it was damaged trying to get away from Hannibal. "See?" She stands besides Miles, showing him things on her screen that Will has no idea about. "Lithuania?" Will's eyes snap to Beverly, who smiles and nods and swipes along her screen, she pretends she doesn't notice the way Will's looking at her, he's terrified now.

"I know it's a long travel time but it'll be worth it, especially with the snow and the house I chose, it'll be beautiful! And I know how much Pancake and the dogs will love it!" Beverly rattles on, as if she's actually planned this trip as a surprise, as a treat for Will and his family. He feels like he needs to lie down before he passes out but then Miles is looking up at him, for reassurance and convincing and Will doesn't have the luxury to pass out. "Will? A house in Lithuania?" Miles asks, he doesn't buy it, he's on the cusp of it but he needs convincing. Will smiles and goes to him, takes his hands as Beverly steps out of the moment, saying she'd check on Mischa. They're left along.

"I thought it would be a good opportunity," Will says softly, his hands in Miles' as the Beta studies his face. *"Opportunity?"* Miles echoes, Will smiles up at him as if he's not sickened by the lies that follow from his lips. "Hmm, Bev watching Mischa, a whole new area for the dogs to explore, we could have a lot of extra time on our hands," Will leans in to Miles, fights to make his scent actively more appealing as he kisses Miles' lips chastely, a soft bite of his teeth on his lips as he lists off the fake advantages that come if they leave. "We could use a break, concentrate on *us* a little more," It's the winning suggestion and Miles is smiling and relaxed as he nods his head in agreement. "Okay," He murmurs against Will's lips.

"But we spend next Christmas with my parents like we keep promising," Miles says, his hands on Will's hips as Will smiles and nods his head, kissing him once more before stepping away from him. "Okay, I promise," They share a final kiss before Beverly comes back, Will's not convinced that she wasn't outside the door listening all along as she helps Miles pack an appropriately sized suitcase full of his things. Will excuses himself to the bathroom under the guise of having a shower before they leave but he simply turns the water on to cover the sound of his guilty and shamed sobs.

Here Lies Our Love, Immortalised With The Tear Drops Of Raphael & The Blood Of Uriel.

Chapter Notes

I don't know, do you guys like the flashback scenes?

Without Beta.

He thinks about all that Beverly's told him. Everything's she's gone through the past few days, everything she had given up to come save him. He feels stiff and barely alive just thinking about that particular reality. Just how much he owes to Beverly, he doubts he'll ever be able to repay Beverly for what she's done to him but he would always try, in some way or another, he would try to repay her for all the times she had saved his life, had sacrificed just so he, Will, would be able to survive a little longer. The drive monotonous with long stretches of icy road ahead and snowy mountains surrounding them. Miles drives without hurry, talking every now and then about the scenery that they drive past that Will can't quite bring himself to care about. Beverly sitting in the back of the car with Mischa.

The two chattering to each other a continuous hum that holds Will's fragile mind to reality. He looks at the two of them in the rear view mirror, assessing how much the Omega had changed since the last time he'd seen her, it had been too long between her last visit and now.

Flashback

She retained all her vibrancy, the smart whip of her sass that effortlessly rolled off of her tongue, the knowing smirk that always greeted Will after a few glasses of wine, the long hair that never seemed to grow or shrink or grey or darken. Will looking at Beverly Katz was like looking at a living photograph, right down to the perfectly manicured nails and five minutes slow watch around her left wrist. Will gets up from his chair at the breakfast table, where he passively sits and watches the kitchen bustle with life. Miles and his sister bickering over the positioning of candles on the overly extravagant birthday cake Miles' parents had brought them which sat in the centre of the counter they stood in front of. Miles' parents, Corrine and Richard laughing and chattering outside in the garden with Mischa and the dogs. "Will," He's drawn out of his thoughts, smiling at Sadie as she demands his attention from her brother's side. "Tell my pig of a Beta brother that the candles are *fine!"* She says, both pleading and exasperated as she bats at Miles' interfering hands as he tries to readjust the candles placed on the cake, Will laughing as he go to stand besides Beverly, assuring Miles that the candles didn't need readjusting.

"Fine! But when we look at the photos later and you say that the candles are wonky - " Will stops listening to Miles bickering with Sadie and thankfully takes the offered wineglass from Beverly. "Thanks," Will smiles, ignoring the catch of Miles' eye that lingers on the wineglass in his hand as Beverly bows her head slightly as she pours the red liquid into the glass. "Anything for the birthday boy!" She smirks, the smirk reserved solely for Will, who delights in the look and takes an eager first sip of wine. He's not pregnant like Miles wants, he's allowed to drink. He leans his weight against the counter by the sink, gazing out the window that overlooks the garden and watches Mischa run and squeal outside, the dogs chasing around her. It's a picturesque moment that he wishes they could all remain inside of, inside this precious little bubble for ever but just like he always does, Will thinks of Hannibal and wonders what he's doing? Does he know it's Will's birthday? Of course he does.

"You okay?" Beverly stands besides him, her hand taking his as they watch Mischa and Miles' parents outside, he sighs and watches the wine swirl around the sides of his glass. In truth he's not entirely sure. "Of course," He lies regardless of how he feels, before either can say anything more Miles is around them, his arms reaching around Will to steal the Omega away from Beverly, who complains playfully as Miles and Will walk back round to the counter where the cake resided. "Mum, dad, cake!" Sadie calls out the backdoor, turning back round with a wide grin on her face as Corrine and Richard come in through the door, the dogs barking and running happily around as Beverly scoops Mischa up and passes her to Miles to be perched on his hip while he lights the candles for Will to blow out, all twenty-two.

"D'you think they got away?" Will asks without looking at her, his eyes fixed to absent and vaguely curious as he stares out the window of the car. Beverly sits in the back, typing away on a phone she'd seemingly pulled out of nowhere. "There's been no reports," She says, as if both Omegas don't already know that this has gone far beyond reports. Far beyond the legalities that would normally protect someone. No, Jack was after blood, not police reports. "What are you thinking?" Beverly's voice feel as if it floats around his head, distant as it pulls him back to her. "My birthday, that stupid cake," Will says, smiling as he shook his head with the memory of Miles and Sadie's bickering. "Urgh! The fruit one?" Beverly asks, wrinkling her nose at the memory of the surprise that lay within the offending cake, Will nodding his head as he started to laugh at the memory of Beverly trying to politely bin her slice and then promptly being given another one when Corinne had thought she'd finished her slice before everyone else.

"You've never drunk so much wine!" Will continues, laughing with tears in his eyes now as Beverly continued to shake her head with disgust in the back of the car. "It was fucking awful!" She says, sounded just as disgusted as she had done when she's expressed her disgust towards the cake to Will the first time. "Yeah, I know," Will admits with a contented sigh, wiping at his eyes as silence fell between them again. His thoughts fall to Hannibal, just like they had done when looking at the cake on his birthday, would he find them? How long did they have before he found them? What would he do to Miles if he did find them? They were questions not easily answered and Will didn't necessarily want one of them answered. Still, he couldn't help but to ask his long dreaded question.

"Are we safe, Bev?" He asks, dreading the possibilities that opened with it, like a Pandora's Box. Beverly looks up from her phone she'd resumed looking at and stared at Will through

the reflection of the rear view mirror. Her face no longer amused and disgusted by the memory of fruit cake, her eyes no longer bright with fondness. No, she was protector now. Critical and realistic.

"I don't know." Those three simple words turns the blood in Will's veins to ice. "Does anyone else know where we're headed?" He asks, the pretence of silence between them slipping as Will turns to look at her over his shoulder. Beverly doesn't get to answer. The car door gets pulled open, fresh air floods the car as Mischa is helped into her seat again by both Miles and Beverly. "We got ice creams!" The little girl announces, a huge grin on her face as she excitedly hands Beverly an ice cream that Will would never usually allow her to have, especially in the middle of the day. Nonetheless he takes the one she offers him.

"Thank you, baby." He smiles, throwing a both questioning and accusatory look to Miles who now sat besides him again the driver's seat trying to remain oblivious to the Omega's subtle glare. Innocently taking the ice cream offered to him from Mischa without comment or daring to spare a glance in Will's direction. An issue Will would pick back up when they had arrived at their destination.

Flashback

She walks to her almost certain death, resolute that she had made the right decision to come back to the beast's den empty handed. The harsh cold of the night bites at her skin as she waits for his answer to the ring of the doorbell, she considers running but knows that outrunning Hannibal Lecter is not something to be achieved twice in one night. He answers in silk pyjama bottoms, a bare torso, slipper clad feet, an open rob hanging loosely round his broad shoulders. He's like an Alpha who had been awoken in the middle of the night unexpectedly and not the hideous beast she knows him to be. Not the Alpha who had become a father a matter of hours earlier. She can't reconcile the colliding images. "Miss Bloom," He greets, holding the door open wider now, his chin lifting to pull rank over the woman stood before him on his doorstep. He looks at her critically, she does not look like a woman who had succeeded in her task. "Hannibal," She says, her voice quiet to him.

"Perhaps you should come in," He says, pushing the door and stepping aside to let her inside the coveted invitation inside the Alpha's home. Leading her inside the familiar home down the dark hallway, he hadn't bothered to turn any lights on, who had he thought she if not herself? Alana wonders as she follows the Alpha into the dining-room where there is a small fire lit in the large fireplace, a light lit on the large table. "Please, sit." He pulls a chair out for her and helps her to sit. "Your coat?" She stiffly removes it and hands it to him, watching with delayed reaction as he moves to hang it up by the door they had just walked through. "Would you like some tea? I just brewed a pot," His voice is pleasant as he sits across from her, his robe falling open as he bends to sit, she struggles to imagine a beating heart laying within the flesh and not some mangled black mess of twisted evil. "Alana?" Her attention is pulled back to his expectant face, a teapot in his hand as he hovers the nose over a cup. Alana shakes her head and he replaces it back on the tray. "Chocolate cake then? I was having a crave before you arrived." Alana declines the offer of food, watches with a dry throat and seizing chest as Hannibal cuts himself a slice of the cake that looks as if it had been professionally baked by the world's finest baker. Alana knows this isn't the case however,

Hannibal taking too much pride in his culinary creations to ever have something so beautiful in his home that he did not have a hand in creating.

"So, I take it that this isn't a social visit?" He asks conversationally, picking up piece of his slice of cake from the plate, the silver of his fork glittering in the firelight. "No," Alana admits, growing uneasy with the rarely seen domesticity of Hannibal Lecter. She can't imagine him being a father. A father to a daughter no less. Could he really one day face the mundane reality a child brings with its existence, school runs and extracurricular activities, the waiting with parents of snotty nosed children in the cold outside the school gates in the middle of winter? Alana found the imagine impossible to conjure. Would he one day sit in this room in pyjamas with cake and tea but rather than sitting opposite to Alana would he sit opposite to little Mischa? The girl no longer so little but rather a teenager struggling her way into womanhood? Would he reprimand her when she snuck out for an evening? Would he punish her or nurture her? Alana studies the Alpha's face illuminated by the sparse light of the room and wonders what kind of father he could possibly be?

"I hate to interrupt your thoughts, Miss Bloom, but why have you come here this night?" He interrupts her thoughts, her musings of the future, and drags her back to the present. "My lead." Alana says suddenly, snapping back to why she came here, the danger she was currently in, the danger the Alpha sitting across from her eating cake posed. She sits straighter in her chair, keeps a tighter leash on her thoughts as Hannibal smiles, as if she had amused him, and takes a drink of his tea to wash the cake down with. "Your lead? And what has come of your lead, Alana?" The switch from formality and friendship keeps her dancing along a knife's edge, one false move and she would end up paying with her life. "Turned into a dead end." She lies regretfully. "I'm sorry," She adds, daring to catch his eye this time. "I suppose your services will no longer be required then," Hannibal says after several long moments of silence between the two, the only sounds coming from the crackling fire illuminating Hannibal in a deadly fashion. Despite the crispness of his voice, the diction of his words, Alana struggles to understand what he means. As if she was deciphering a foreign language without aid.

"Hannibal?" She dares to venture, for guidance as to what she is supposed to do now that he has declared he has no further use of her. "You are free to go, Alana," He says, when she is on the cusp of daring to prompt him again, he speaks as he rises from his chair, Alana following his lead quickly and rising from her own. She can't imagine him dealing with a rebellious teenager. He picks up her coat and helps her put it on, his fingers guiding over her shoulders, pulling out her hair from between the jacket and her clothing. "Goodbye, Hannibal." She dares to murmur when she is free of his touch, taking her first step across the doorway joining dining-room and hall, halts suddenly with a terrified gasp when Hannibal's fingers suddenly grip around her arm. "Alana," He says, stepping closer to her, as if she had simply dropped something and he was returning it to her. "If I shoulder find you lied to me tonight," He begins, a smile gracing his lips as the fingers not gripping her arm moved to trace the side of her face, delicate and soft. Like and old lover's greeting in the soft sunrise. It makes her skin crawl and stomach convulse.

"Needless to say that the ramifications will be great," He twirls a stray lock of hair around his finger, smiling as he looks into her eyes. "I would never be so stupid as - " He cuts her off with a quiet click of his tongue, her own shrivelling up within her mouth. "There's no need

for words of reassurance." He releases all his touches. Steps away from her and waves goodbye, smiling as she straightens her back out and carries on down the dark hallway towards the front door, resists quickening her footsteps as she grew closer to her escape. "Say hello to Margot for me," Hannibal calls, his body a long shadow down the hallway thanks to the light behind him, Alana freezes with her hand against the front door. This is her opportunity to come clean and still have a chance of surviving.

"And Morgan, of course." He adds, a cold shiver runs down her spine and she wants nothing more than to wrap herself in her wife's arms, to hold their son close to her chest. She pushes open the door. "Goodbye." She walks away, walks away from her chance of ever being free of Hannibal Lecter's rotting grip. "Goodbye, Miss Bloom."

Fiery Red Hair, Vicious White Fangs, Disguised Fingers, Freddie Lounds Walks The Grounds.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

Hannibal Lecter resides in the hospital for a week, plotting out his next move. He was beginning to heal from Beverly Katz's vicious attack and with the receding pain and healing skin, he was starting to formulate how best to capture not only Beverly but also his Omega, Will Graham, who Katz had no doubt returned to now. He could imagine the two now, with his nameless daughter, hiding somewhere he would be sure never to find them. After all, Katz had managed to keep Will and his daughter from him for years without him ever finding them. He could imagine the two Omegas plotting together, finding a way to remain outside of the Alpha's reach. Hannibal wasn't too much of an arrogant Alpha to be foolish enough to deny that Beverly Katz could easily continue to conceal both herself and his family unless the Alpha found a way to force her hand, to force her to reveal herself foolishly and without thinking. It would take a rather daring step, a public spectacle that didn't necessarily need to be disguised or dressed up as anything other than a way to force them out of hiding. His musings are interrupted when the police car he was siting in the backseat of pulls to a gradual stop outside of their destination. Hannibal thanking the police escort as he climbed from the car and into the cold December air.

He's still stiff in his movements from the attack but he is well enough to walk without assistance, the outside of the house is cornered off, bounds of tape and police officers standing around as security, Hannibal knows that it would deter nearly all the vulturous press apart from one, who stood at the edges of the tape snapping photos of those who come and go, Hannibal approaches her with an understanding of respect, she lowers her camera and smiles at him, her fiery hair blows in the icy wind of the day. She tucks it back with black gloved fingers. "I didn't know Jack had an on call therapist." Freddie Lounds says cruelly as Hannibal quirks one corner of his mouth upwards in acknowledgement of her words. "How was your stay in hospital, Lecter? I did visit." She adds, smiling as she tilts her head towards her shoulder and studies the Alpha, she can tell he's in pain. "Yes, I recall that you snuck into my room and took a photo of my injuries." The Alpha says with a nonchalant expression on his face, Freddie hums unrepentant. "A girl's gotta eat." She picks up her camera and snaps a photo of him suddenly, amusing Hannibal further as she checks the photo briefly before returning her attention to the Alpha stood before her.

"Why are you talking to me?" She asks bluntly, her brows quirking upwards as she waits for his answer, he considers the best way to phrase what he wants and decides that being just as blunt would serve his desires best. "I want you to find Will Graham." Freddie Lounds fails to

respond straight away, her mind searching through all she knows about Hannibal Lecter, about Will Graham and how the two may have ever known each other. She comes up with nothing. "I thought Will Graham was dead." Getting as much information as she can is the course of action the short redhead decides on, much to the delight of the Alpha stood in front of her. "I thought you had written numerous essays on how Will Graham is alive, Miss Lounds." She pouts at him unimpressed and he smiles, enjoying the way she eats from his palm so willingly. "There will be a public appeal for Will Graham soon, he'll be forced out of hiding, I want you to find him before the police do when he emerges from the dark." Hannibal allows her time to process his request, working out the ways she will be punished for doing his bidding. "Why do you want to find him before the police? Aren't you on the same side?" Hannibal smiles and gives her a treat for her fast mind, he reaches his hand to his inside jacket pocket and produces the final step in winning over Freddie Lounds, the photo of his daughter taken from Beverly Katz's home. "Will Graham and I have a personal history. In exchange for your services, Miss Lounds," Hannibal tucks the photo away again, catching the way Freddie moves to stare at the picture for as long as possible before it disappears from her sight. "I will feed your *TattleCrime* stories with concrete evidence from the investigation." Hannibal watches her face betray her delight at the offer, she's blinded by the new opportunity and the offer of recognition that she agrees to the Alpha's deal. "Whom should I contact when I find him?" He smiles. "Only me. If another person finds out about this, Miss Lounds - " He allows Freddie's imagination to fill in for his threat. She simply smiles at him just as confident as before he had approached her. "There's no need to threat, Lecter. I'll find your Omega." She turns her back and leaves, Hannibal watches her go before he turns and heads up the pathway towards Beverly Katz's home. Crossing the threshold of her front door with his teeth gritted.

Hannibal.

The scent of her home burns my throat as I enter the threshold. It is a natural reaction of an Alpha with a wounded pride and a lust to enact revenge, the two things mix nastily with her scent. I find Jack examining the kitchen, his usual suspicion coats the place with a bitter twist of urgency. "Should you be out of the hospital so soon?" He asks, not out of care but out of his own need of me, he does not want me if I am no longer of use. I smile without warmth or sincerity. "Come now, Jack. A little walk never harms the healing soul." I say, looking round the kitchen, my eyes lingering on the board of photos as I do. How many photos of her are here? Within his grasp but so far from his reach. "It's not your soul I'm worried about, Hannibal." Jack says, finding no humour in my words as he joins my side and gazes at the photos on the cork board. "I'm fine, I assure you." I say when Jack is done studying the photos he deems of no importance. "Don't push yourself too hard," He says, turning to scrutinise my face. I remain staring at the cork board, refusing to submit to his gaze. He moves on when his team come into the room, taking evidence and photographs. They're scents help to cover up Beverly's.

"Have you found any leads?" I ask, careful not to overstep my place again. Watching Jack turn his back to the room to stare out the windows looking over the backyard. "A few," He allows vaguely, obviously feeling uncharitable towards my defiant act of dominance, a slip on my part due to my wounded pride. "It seems our friend Dr. Bloom may have had more involvement than we first thought." The mention of her name makes my Alpha convulse in

his cage, fury and vengeful at the knowledge. I keep him on a precarious leash and try but fail somewhat to keep the malice from my voice when I prompt Jack for more information. "There are things here that suggest she was involved with Will Graham's initial disappearance." Jack continues, apparently failing to notice my loss of composure as he does. "How so?" I prompt again, fighting to keep myself in check, Jack sighs heavily, his shoulders stooping and his head bowing. An Alpha on the edge of giving up, I want to tear him in two for such an admission.

"Beverly left in such a hurry after - " He doesn't say what he wanted to, senses that I am in no mood to be reminded of the fact I was beaten by a simple Omega. "There's plenty of evidence left behind to go over, mobiles, passports, all sorts of things to suggest that she had planned for something *like this* happening," I nod my head, a stiff action that only allows acknowledgement for the words he had spoken, the people around us deem the room done and leave the two of us alone once again. "The phones, have they been checked?" Jack nods and turns his back on the windows, faces me with heavy eyes. Something had changed in him since our last meeting. "They were cracked last night, mostly they're clean except for a few unsaved numbers, we're running them now." I nod my head, calmer now than I was before, the leash slowly becoming less precarious. "We suspect at least one of the numbers to be Alana Bloom's," I nod my head. "And one of the other's - " I look at him. "To be Will Graham's?" Jack nods his head. "We're tracing them, hopefully they'll throw something up." I nod my head, no words fitting between us. I know what needs to be done. "I think it's time to reveal to the press that Will Graham is still alive. "No." Jack says, adamant in his response as he looks at me from across the kitchen with a derisive expression.

He moves from the counter he stands against and walks out the backdoor, an attempt to escape temptation, I decide as I follow him. He walks down the steps of his former colleagues porch. "You should reconsider," I say, walking besides him as he walks further into the icy open air. Immediately I feel as if I can breathe again now that I am not trapped in the scent of Beverly Katz. "Doctor, I wouldn't - " Jack begins, the trappings of a threat on his tongue that threatens to cut my pride just as easily as the knife of Beverly's knife had cut my flesh. He hesitates, I use his hesitation. "Think about it," I begin, uncharacteristically quick and urgent as I do, I blame the scent of Beverly Katz playing with my senses but I know it is a different Omega affecting me. "You reveal to the public and the press that Will Graham is alive, having survived the Ripper all these years," I say, undercutting Jack's reason with my own desires, fooling him with the idea of glory from the ever crushing public opinion of him. "Reveal not only that but that Will Graham is also missing, " I pause, testing the Alpha's willingness to be mislead, he does not interrupt, turn his head subtly towards me for me to continue, I hide the smile from my lips. "You will distract the Ripper with the knowledge that the Mate he had previously assumed to be dead, for years, is now revealed to be alive, he *will* make a mistake!" I say, false conviction in my voice as Jack considers my offer, his face contorted into lines of concentration and conflict.

I don't speak, rather I allow Jack's mind to idealise my words. Watch as the man lowers his guard, places the glory of such a plan working over the reality he would be left with. "Suddenly you have the public looking for Will too, who knows how Will's been living these past few years, in the shadows or in the light? You would have new leads - " I trail my words off, open to a conclusion Jack most desires. I treat his mind like a child being led down a candy covered path to the witch's house. All he needs is encouragement. "It would put Will

Graham's life at too much risk," Jack says finally, shaking his head as if to escape the temptation of my words, it is a weak refusal, like the child is too scared to pick up the first piece of candy, afraid of being caught and reprimanded. I follow him as he walks further down the path of Beverly's backyard. He studies the naked branches, his breath creating silver clouds. "Only as much risk as it is at now, he would be found in a matter of days with the tips from the public." I say, a reassuring whisper in his ear, the whisper of encouragement in the child's mind. Jack sighs heavily, looking up towards the icy sky as if hoping to find an answer in the blue white colours that meet him. He's deep in thought. "We would be admitting to having lost Will Graham in custody to the press, we would be giving them - " Jack says, starting his weak decline of my offer.

I interrupt, careful to make him feel as if he is letting me do so. "No-one would remember the *carelessness,"* I begin, careful to keep the sneer from my voice at the fact that Jack had been the one to have lost my Mate in the first place. I clear my throat, clear the grudge from my mind and continue to redirect Jack back to the path I had chosen for him to go down with only my hand and my voice to guide him. *"If* it resulted in the true Ripper being caught," I watch Jack's mind work, his thoughts plain as if they were written out for me to read. He idealises the glory of being the one to find the Ripper, the satisfaction of catching me himself. Glory for being known as the one to have caught me. He smiles before he can hide it, his delusion of ever catching me as a real possibility. The child picks his first piece of candy from the path. "I'll get Zeller to organise an appeal," Jack says, turning to walk back to the house. "I hope you're right about this," He adds, calling over his shoulder as he leaves me where I stand.

In The Dark Woods My Bones Ache For Yours. Do You Still Think Of My Lips On Yours?

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's the crack of dawn when they finally arrived at Beverly's chosen destination. Beverly now in the driver's seat and Miles in the back with Mischa, both fast asleep much like the Omega in the passenger seat besides her. She watches Will for several minutes after she had parked the car, watches how he seemingly sleeps so peacefully with his head tucked against his hand and the window, his shoulders relaxed and slightly hunched. Carefully, so as not to startle him and wake the rest of the car up, she puts her warm hand against his shoulder and whispers his name, calling him to wake up from his slumber as she does. He frowns as her voice reaches his ears, grumbling as he tries to turn away and shut Beverly's voice out but he can't. Not with her hand shaking his shoulder gently and her voice growing less gentle and more intrusive, he gives up before long and looks over his shoulder with the same irritated look he usually gave her when she drank the last of the milk or didn't wash her cup up after herself, Beverly can't help but to smile at the look.

"We're here," Beverly says handing Will his glasses off of the dashboard, with a resigned sigh he carefully uncurls himself and sits up in his seat, looking over his shoulder at the still sleeping passengers, smiling fondly at the way Miles tucks himself close to Mischa. Protective, like a father would. He feels guilty once the comparison enters his head and turns his attention back to Beverly. "Where are we" He asks when she offers no words of her own, it's apparently what she's been waiting for him to say as she pushes the door open quietly and gestures for him to do the same, putting her finger to her lips to shush him when Will starts to open the door with little care. She catches the way he rolls his eyes at her and throws one of the mints Miles had brought from their last pit stop at his head. "And I thought I only had one child." Will mutters once he's deemed to be far enough away from the car to safely speak again, Beverly is the one to roll her eyes now as she leads them up the long driveway, she'd been careful to park far enough away so that the house wasn't visible through the early morning fog. "Where are we?" Will asks after several minutes of walking, a shiver lacing his words.

"Somewhere safe," Beverly says, speeding up a little as she catches glimpses of the house through the fog, Will speeding up to keep up with her now, his face scrunched up in suspicion as he begins looking around for a hint as to where they are, he apparently finds it after several minutes, stopping dead in his tracks and demanding that Beverly stop as well, which she does, once several feet ahead of him. *"Where* are we, Beverly?" Beverly knows she can't keep their location from him any longer and instead settles to try to pacify his reaction. "Will, you

just have to remember that this is the *only* place he won't look for us," Beverly begins, her voice steady and calm as Will begins marching towards her. "What do you mean, Beverly?" He snips at her, walking past her up the trail they had been walking along, Beverly quick to follow him. "Will - Will, just wait!" Too late.

Will stops in his tracks suddenly, causing Beverly to nearly collide with him before she's able to stop. She halts and watches him as he takes in the massive house looming over him. Stares at it with a determined expression of hatred and disgust. "There has to be somewhere else." He says, his voice sounding strange as he speaks, Beverly shakes her head, unable to summon the words of regret and apology she feels for making him go through this, but there really is no other choice, at least not until she has a few days to work something out. "He never comes here, Will. I swear to you." Beverly says, trying to quell the growing storm of her fellow Omega as she does. "I've had the place ready for - You won't even know it was *his."* Beverly says, whatever she was going say originally deemed unsuitable for Will to hear. He can guess what she was going to say anyway. Looking over his shoulder at Beverly and then back at the house in front of him. Could he really do this?

"Just a few days, if you can't stay any longer I'll find somewhere else." Beverly says, putting her hand on Will's shoulder in an attempt to comfort him, Will's unsure if he wants to be comforted as he allows her hand to remain. "Just promise there's no big family portrait or something lurking around?" He says, attempting to calm himself, his stomach feels as if he's swallow a dozen butterflies, Beverly smiles and assures him that any trace of Hannibal has been extracted and placed into storage some place far away, Will hates that he feels disappointed at the news. "Come on, I suppose I best get a tour before Mischa and Miles realise we've gone." Will says finally, steeling himself as Beverly pulls a set of keys from her jacket pocket and approaches the large front door. It feels wrong that Hannibal isn't here to greet him to his home, Will pushes the feeling down and follows Beverly inside the house, she flips the lights of the hallway on as she goes. Will feels as if he's left his body as he looks around the completely foreign surrounding, the Omega in him knows this place is safe, is the place of his Mate but Will feels like a stranger, an intruder. He swallows the growing lump in his throat and follows Beverly as she gives him a tour of all the vast areas and hidden rooms, Will even manages to smile as she shows him the kitchen and the beautiful french double doors leading out to the forest like backyard. "The dogs will be here in a few days too." She says as she leads him from the kitchen out to the dining-room. "So, can we stay?" Beverly asks once all of the ground floor has been explored and they're standing in the large hallway again, Will on the cusp of his decision when the door pushes open and Mischa comes running in, distracting them both as she leaps for Will's arms. "Found you!" She announces with a huge grin on her face as Will chuckles and picks her up to hold close to his chest, Miles follows in less dramatically and lets out an impressed whistle as he looks round the large hallway.

"Wow!" He circles and then looks at Will and Beverly. "This place is amazing!" He joins Will at his side, his arm around his waist, body close to his. "You're amazing, Beverly!" She smiles at the Beta modestly, giving Will an unsure look as Miles takes the little girl from Will's arms. The decision made for him. They would be staying, whether he wanted to or not.

Will.

Beverly takes Miles and Mischa off for a tour of the house, an excuse she gives me to have some time on my own. To adjust to the house on my own terms rather than have Miles watching and studying my behaviour. They go out to explore the surrounding grounds, I go explore the upstairs rooms of the house. I suppose I'm searching out old skeletons in closets. Everything's been prepped for our arrival, clean and pristine. Furniture polished and cleaned and rearranged, but the fact this place used to Hannibal's never leaves my mind. Was he born in this room? I wonder as I enter the attic converted to a master bedroom. Did his mother labour on the four-poster bed? Cry and push the Alpha into the world? I fall back on the large mattress, it felt new, Beverly probably had anything that may still hold his scent removed from the property. I don't blame her. I bury my fingers in the rich fabric of the bed sheets and close my eyes, falling into the make-believe memories. If we were here together I would Heat in this room. Mischa would be taken care of and Hannibal would be by my side. I exhale the breath I hadn't realised I was holding in and remember the way Hannibal's touch, the itch of my skin real even if he wasn't here now. His teeth would glitter in the light, threatening and tempting. I would lay my neck out for him - The floor creaks by the door and I open my eyes, slow and hesitant. Miles stands in the doorway.

"This our room?" He asks, looking round the spacious room with an appreciative eye, I want to tell him to get out. I want to scream and strike him for invading the space, for mocking the place my Alpha should stand in his place. I swallow and smile. "Hmm, maybe." Miles smiles and chuckles and enters the room, it feels like he's spitting on my Bond. "Wow, this is comfy." He says as he lays besides me on the bed, taking one of my hands in his as he does. I wish to tear out his throat, I turn my head and smile at him. "Beverly and Mischa are driving the car up," I know what he wants, his hand not twined with mine reaching to unbutton my shirt. I want to run and hide until my Alpha comes to my rescue. I smile as Miles' hand reaches inside my shirt and starts massaging my breast, his thumb brushing over my nipple. My breasts were slowly adjusting to Mischa's switch to solids but they still ached when Miles massaged them. They were resisting the change, wanting another pup to nourish.

"And what ever will we do with all this alone time?" I smile as Miles smiles back, leaning over to kiss me. A soft kiss that blossoms into slowly building desire. I want to run. His hand becomes more persistent around my breast, I moan when my nipple leaks milk, Miles remains undeterred, leaning over into my chest to lap at the leaking nipple. I flutter my eyes shut and think of Hannibal, imagine Hannibal.

His hands undressing me, his lips on my breast, his teeth dragging over my skin, his body on top of me. *Him* inside of me. I moan and let myself fall to delusion as Miles brings me his offering of pleasure with his tongue, with his fingers and his body. I wish it was enough. I wish I wanted him and not Hannibal. If I believe hard enough I can still smell him in the air around me, driving my fall off of the cliff of pleasure. Maybe he spent his teenage years here? Maybe he Rutted in this room? Maybe he claimed his first Omega here? I gasp, arching upwards into the Beta body above me. My mind swirls with murky memories of Hannibal. They become more twisted as the time we are apart grows. Miles falls back to the space besides me, kissing me in way of thanks as his spend sits between my thighs. I kiss him back and let him fall asleep into bliss. It's the least I owe him. I lay besides him, staring at the ceiling and I think of Hannibal. I wonder what he's doing now? If he's thinking of me?

Chapter End Notes

There was a problem posting my last chapter for this story as it wouldn't let me post past the 5th of May, I'm hoping that it was a one time problem and have contacted AO3 about it, please double check that you've not missed a chapter if you're following this story.

Best,
TDMW.

These Lithuanian Dawns Aren't Quite The Same Without You By My Side.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

Hannibal Lecter pours himself a numberless tumbler full of scotch, watches the amber liquid fall and crash against the sharp cubes of ice already placed within the thin crystal glass. The liquid settling within its new confines as he places the stopped back into the decanter. The Alpha's eyes glimmer as they stare fixed on the photo of his daughter sitting besides the tumbler on the marble top counter. He tries to imagine what she would look like now, several years older than the photo of her in front of him. Wonders if she would have long untamed locks like Will or sleek waves such as his sister and he had had in their youth, he smiles at the memory of his since deceased sister. Mischa would have doted on her brother's child, if she had been given the chance. The memory of her turns bittersweet in his mouth and he moves away, focuses on the possibilities of his daughter and not the unknowable future of his sister.

She would be well read by now, Will indulging her in dozens of fiction and non-fiction stories, Hannibal wonders what would be her favourite? Cinderella? Snow White? Or would she venture away from Princesses altogether? Hannibal had a strange craving to know such a detail. The Alpha slowly rousing from his slumber on the cold floor of Hannibal's kitchen mumbles away, groggy from the sedative Hannibal had given him upon his arrival. He winces his pain and fights against the gag in his mouth. The pain caused due to the smashed tumbler he had dropped when the sedative had began it's work on his system. The shattered pieces of crystal now residing on the floor and partly in his right cheek where his face had met the cold floor. Hannibal ignores him in favour of musings of his daughter. How she delighted him without ever having met her.

Of course he could already assumed that she would have a keen affinity for the world around her. Her parentage all but guaranteeing it such an outcome. The Alpha imagines her making mud pies in the woods Will would take her to explore, the dogs the Omega had always adored barking and running around her as she dug through the dirt, earth getting under her tiny fingernails as her cheeks went red from the winter cold. Hannibal could almost *see* the image. Will would take her fishing in a few years, when he deemed her old enough and big enough to stand in the icy water for the required prolonged hours. He would teach her as his father had taught him and when they'd return with her very first catch, Hannibal would be the one to show her how to best cook it. He would show her how to gut it while Will settled the dogs and cleaned their equipment.

He takes a drink of his scotch, letting the now cool alcohol scorch away the thoughts that run wild through his mind. He couldn't let himself become carried away now. He couldn't afford

to make anymore mistakes. Not with the Alpha struggling now to make his escape at his feet. "Calm yourself now, Mr. Budge." Hannibal says coolly, smiling down at the glaring Alpha as he places his glass back on the counter top and collects up the photo, tucking it away in his trouser pocket before crouching down to become level with the bound Alpha. He reaches his hand out to the Alpha's face, making the bound man flinch away, breathing heavily through his flared nostril, Hannibal shows him a kind smile as he continues his journey to the Alpha's face and pulls away the gag from around his mouth. "What did you give me?" The words are breathless and mixed with fear and anger, Hannibal smiles and stands, placing the makeshift gag on the counter as he picks up his tumbler once more. "A glass of scotch, as *you* requested." He says, tone and expression nonchalant as Tobias Budge growls and bares his teeth at the man stood above him. A wounded Alpha's dying growl, Hannibal thinks as he casts his eyes down on the man. "It's impolite to toy with a dying man, Dr. Lecter." He seethes darkly, attempting to break from the bounds, his body still too weak due to the drugs in his system.

Hannibal crouches back down, his drink in hand, and smiles with an amused expression. "You're not dying." He says simply, drinking from his tumbler again. "Maybe not yet," The captive says to his captor, looking down at his body and then buck up at Hannibal. "But you don't intend on setting me free." He states the obvious and Hannibal smiles and inclines his head. "You're point is taken." He gets to his feet and walks around his kitchen, collecting fresh water in a glass and a cloth from a draw beneath the sink, returning to the guarded Alpha in less than a few minutes. "We're men cut from the same cloth, Dr. Lecter." Tobias Budge says, gritting his teeth as Hannibal began tending to the Alpha's cut face, skillfully extracting a piece of glass that poke from his torn flesh. "Are we?" The former physician asks politely. "We both know there is something beautiful in chaos." The wounded man says, hissing like a weakened pup to his mother as Hannibal removes another slice of glass. It's a pity that he had to be holding his favourite glass, he thinks as he drops the extracted piece of glass into an empty bowl.

"That does not make us brothers, Mr. Budge." Hannibal says before adding, with an admittedly curious tone. "Did you see chaos in Franklyn?" An ugly smile grows across the wounded Alpha's face, causing the glass to retreat deeper inside his flesh and the blood to trickle in fast tracks down his skin. ""No." The simple word causes pleasure to flood his body. "Franklyn was merely a door that had to be opened." He says, Hannibal hums politely but feels only partly interested. Franklyn had been an unfortunate accident that had made a mess he had to clean up, Tobias Budge was simply a glass of spilt milk to him, nothing more and nothing less. "And whose house did you wish to enter?" He asks, indulging him as he had pointed out earlier, he was now a marked man. "Yours, Dr. Lecter." Hannibal arches a brow at him but gives no more reaction. He stands to dispose of the glass and bloody cloth. "Well, consider yourself at home." He says, rinsing his hands of the Alpha's blood at his kitchen sink, watching through the reflection of his kitchen window as the Alpha propped himself further up on his elbow but buckled and resorted back to laying on the floor.

"This isn't how I imagined my entrance. Poisoned on your kitchen floor," He says bitterly, adding as Hannibal returns to stand above him. "*At your feet*." Hannibal smiles unapologetic and without remorse. "Then how did you imagine it, Tobias?" He asks, inclining his head again as the Alpha exhaled and met the man's eye. "Different." He says, a muted word uttered with acceptance, Hannibal nods his head and crouches for a final time before the man. "I

didn't poison you," He corrects, bringing his hand to reach around the man's neck. "It's bad for the food." The room is filled with a bloodcurdling crunch of bone beneath the Alpha's hand, his eyes on Tobias Budge's as the life drains from them. A useless Alpha in life and a good meal in death, Hannibal thought as he got to his feet and went to dispose of his clothes. A problem resolved.

Hannibal.

"Having a bonfire, Dr. Lecter?" Jack calls from where I had left him in the kitchen, I come down the stairs and find him peering out the backdoor as I walk along the hallway, smiling as I run my fingers through my still damp hair. "Something like that," I agree as he turns and greets me with a clueless smile. "I'm sorry for intruding," He lies, gesturing to my wet hair and half buttoned shirt, I shake my head, as he desires me to, and insist it's not a problem. He smiles, satisfied that he has regained control of me. "You must be nervous. It is a big day," I say, watching as Jack looks around the room and settles his gaze back on me. Not nervous, at least not about addressing the press. "What's on your mind, Jack?" I ask, picking my own coffee up and taking a drink as he considers, unsure of how to proceed.

"What's your schedule like, Doctor?" I see a trap in his question, my first instinct is to pull the cutting knife out from it's hiding place within the knife rack to my right and to gut him clean in two but I suppress such a reaction, smiling thoughtfully as I take stock of my schedule. "Moderate, why? Would you like an appointment?" The humour eases his posture and he chuckles, a rich rumble from his chest. Shaking his head as he places his cup back on the counter and reaches within his jacket, I tense thinking he is reaching for his gun but it is a fleeting thought quickly soothed away when he produces his worn leather wallet. "You've not met my wife, Bella," He says, coming round to stand besides me, I shake my head. "No, I've not had the pleasure." I say, smiling as Jack produces a photo of himself obviously taken in his youth as he is not as rounded by years, his face not as lined and a smile that had not known the dark underbelly of the world yet. Stood besides him is a beautiful woman. "This is her," He says, his finger gesturing to the woman who beams a bright future that was never fulfilled past the hopefulness in her eye. Forever frozen. "I was wondering if you would take her on as a patient?"

He takes his step away from me and waits for my answer, his fingers brush over the edge of his coffee cup. "You would like me to talk to her?" I question, indulging my curiosity rather than qualm his obvious worries. He smiles but it is bitter. "I believe she needs someone to speak to, *privately*." He stresses as if there is any other type of conversation to be have with a psychiatrist. "Of course." I say, settling my decision as I button the rest of my shirt. "Bring her to my office after the conference." I say, heading back out the kitchen to collect my jacket from upstairs. He's waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs when I return, looking relaxed but partly curious, I do not indulge the curiosity and guide him from my home. "Let's find our Will Graham." I say, smiling fondly as we climb into the awaiting car, Jack nodding solemnly. A resigned hardness to his expression as we made the journey towards our destination.

The bed is cool when the Omega wakes. Stretching his hand out to find the sheets empty of his Beta. Will caresses the sheets empty of Miles' form, the sheets smell of his body. His scent. Will inhales and can't help but to wonder as he does if they once smelt of Hannibal. He turns onto his back, as if turning away from the longing thought, and gazes up at the ceiling as he forgoes putting his glasses on, starring up at the blurry ceiling as he places the palm of his hand against his bare chest and follows as it falls and rises rhythmically.If Miles was already up then he would have taken Mischa with him to where he had gone, Will figures. Noting the lack of his usual thrum of anxiety he usually experienced when Miles whisked his daughter away without first alerting him to such plans. Maybe it was because he knew they were somewhere no-one was at risk of finding them? He knows it's a foolish excuse but he can't help but to try and believe it before he accepts the true reason. The one that cradles his worry like a caring parent comforting a child during a storm. Her father had grown up running in these forests, had become a man within these walls surrounding the Omega. Whatever threatened to harm her would not come from her heritage. Will lets go of his chest and reaches for his glasses, knocking over a folded piece of paper that had not been there the previous night.

He reaches to the floor for it and reads it.

'Beverly's getting the dogs. Taken Mischa out for firewood.'

Will places the note back where he had knocked it and climbs from beneath the sheets, the cool winter air of the bedroom raises goosebumps over his naked skin as he walks to the doorway leading from the bedroom to the adjoining bathroom. Putting his glasses on the corner of the sink as he leans over and washes his face with the warming water, exhaling slowly at the water dripped from his skin. He reaches into the laundry basket and pulls out his birth control. He studies the slim white pills as he selects the one deemed for today. He picks his glasses back up and puts them back on and studies the pill with a new clarity. A bitter pill to swallow, he thinks with a twisted sense of a joke as he puts the pill on his tongue and swallows it quickly down, shoving the pill packet back beneath the sheets in the laundry basket guiltily before proceeding towards the shower, leaving his glasses on the sink once more.

He scrubs his skin as he thinks of Miles and Mischa, bonding in the morning light, their breath silver clouds in the icy air. Doubtless Miles wouldn't have bundled the little girl up enough and she would return with rosy cheeks and near numb fingers, he smiles at the thought. His laugh echoing around the shower as he thinks of how Miles would try to kiss Will to keep him from noticing, sweet talk him with his own icy lips on his. Will can't deny how much he likes the idea that he's sure would become reality. How Miles would proudly show him the chopped firewood and detail his plans on lighting the unused fireplace in the living-room to show off his prowess.

Will smile slips away, like it always does now when his thoughts turn to Miles. Instead of happiness, Will begins to feel guilt building in his stomach and in the bones of his body. He had used the Beta, he is reminded viciously. He did not deserve to see the man smile so lovingly to Will when Will could not reciprocate such a love. His mind began to swirl with thoughts of Hannibal like a dream that betrayed him and became a nightmare only Will could

not summon the courage to call this dream a nightmare. No, the ache of longing that gripped his heart denied him the luxury of denying his want for this dream to become a reality.

The image of Hannibal in place of Miles as he walked in with firewood and Mischa, the little girl *correctly* bundled and grinning happily as she retold her morning activities with her father to her mother. Hannibal grinning proudly as he greeted Will with lips cool on his skin, a promise of heat to come later. Will shivers and wakes from the traitorous thoughts. The water no longer warm but cold on his skin. He shuts it off quickly and climbs from the shower to wrap himself in a towel, shivering as he dries his body of the cold droplets. Wiping with it the thought of Hannibal. The desire of a different reality. He dresses with as much haste he had used to escape the cold water and leaves behind the thoughts of Hannibal in the bedroom, padding down the clean house to use the large kitchen he had yet to exploit since arriving.

Will.

The kitchen is just as clean as the rest of the house, the fridge and cupboards full of foods and appliances, plates and cups and forks. Everything you would need for a kitchen, for a functioning house, is here. I wonder how long Beverly had been planning this for, how many times had she had someone come change the food, had people come clean and garden? I'm busy mixing the pancake batter, the bacon frying in the pan on the stove sizzling along to the radio playing on over the kitchen sink, some pop song that was a big hit a couple of years ago. Beverly's out picking up the dogs, I'm excited to see them, feel as if it's been months since I last had Winston slobbering at my face or Dixon barking at the snow, it feels like months but it's barely been two days. I deem the pancake mix ready for the pan and pull out the second one and put it on the ring besides the bacon. I begin pouring in the first one when the backdoor pushes open and Miles comes trudging in with wood for the fireplace, Mishca comes tumbling in after him, rosy cheeked and singing as she twirls around the kitchen in snow covered boots. "Smells good!" Miles says in way of greeting, leaning to kiss my lips, his are cold just like the rest of his face. "You look beautiful," He says quietly, a goofy grin on his face as he steals another kiss from my lips, I roll my eyes and nudge him away from me.

"Go wash up, it'll be ready by the time you're back down," I say, smiling as I kiss his lips once more before ushering him away again, he takes Mischa away with him, picking her up so she doesn't trudge snow everywhere. "Tell Beverly, that if every place she books for holiday's are as sweet as this place then I may never spend Christmas with my family again!" Miles yells as he walks up the stairs, I laugh and promise I will once she gets back. The pancakes come out fluffy and perfect as I pour out more batter and pile up the ones that are done on a plate and set it in the middle of the breakfast table, if feels like the perfect morning, like a normal morning being back home with just Miles and Mischa. I can almost forget where I am, I can almost forget that this is the kitchen Hannibal fell in love with cooking. I can almost forget that Hannibal probably trudged in through the same backdoor Mischa had just come in through when he was her age, the same rosy cheeks and snow covered boots. Had his mother scolded him? Or had she laughed with him and kissed his rosy cheek? I can almost forget except I can't. This was his home, where he had most likely been born, where his sister had been born. Where they had grown up. Where Hannibal held the most precious

memories of his youth. Miles and Mischa come tumbling back into the room, both grinning as Miles settles her into her seat and then into his own as I set plates of food down for both of them. It's like we're the perfect family, until Beverly joins us.

I know the second I see her face, the obvious fear and anger in her eyes and her cheeks that we've been found, *somehow.* The dogs bark and run around, happy to see us all again, they provide a distraction to keep Miles from noticing the look on Beverly's face. I get to my feet, moving to grab at Winston and Dixon's collars. "You two finish, I'm just gonna settle the dogs. Bev?" I call her from the trance she's been in since bursting into the kitchen, she snaps out of it before Miles notices and grabs two of the other dogs, pulling them out of the kitchen before doing it again, I have the all out and the kitchen door shut in minutes. "What's happened?" My voice is a low hush so that Miles won't hear on the other side of the door, she shakes her head and makes me follow her into the lounge, the dogs running rampant around us, exploring the new scents, the different rooms, Beverly sends them out into the rest of the house and moves to turn the TV on. She doesn't speak the entire time. I terrified of what she'll say if I force her to speak.

"I'm so sorry." The words are whispered, her face crumbles as she finds the channel she's looking for and grabs the remote, turns it up so we're just able to hear what's being said, my ability to speak is snatched away when the scene changes from a news anchorwoman changes and instead it's a live feed. I know what it is, an empty table, room full of reporters. An appeal. Voices climb and tumble over another, shutters start sounding and flashes go off, Zeller walks out and then Price, Jack follows and then - My throat feels as if it'll close up on itself. *He* walks out and sits besides Jack. "We have called you all here today," Jack begins, talking into a microphone placed in front of him on the table, his face is a brick wall of unreadable emotions, I feel like I'm about to die. "Because of a growing mass of misinformation being spread about the Chesapeake Ripper that risks causing the public major hysteria for very little reason. Today, I will be answering a few questions, dispelling many nonsense rumours and releasing an appeal." The pause he gives allows hands to fly up into the air, voices to yell over one another and for the sounds of the camera shutters to drown the voices out for several seconds at a time. "*Are you any closer to finding the Ripper?*" One faceless voice rises over all the others. Everything quietens to allow for an answer.

"We have no comment to make on that at this point in time," Jack says diplomatic as ever. He looks uncomfortable saying it, like it's being reminded of an embarrassment you'd rather forget. The noise starts up again, demanding answers to various different questions. "*Are the streets still safe for Omegas?*" Jack looks like he wants to rip out the throat of whoever at the question. "*Will you be handing over the case to a different leading officer, Detective?*" Another asks, I feel sick watching Jack deflect and manipulate the questions, Hannibal remaining by his said with the same expression of professionalism on his face, as if he was not the centre of all of this. "Is it true that Will Graham is still alive, Detective Crawford?" Her voice rises above the rest, her face remains attached to the words and suddenly the whole room falls quiet. Freddie Lounds repeats her question when all eyes fall on her, the cameras focus on her fiery hair and crooked smirk, she raises her head like a regal queen on her throne punishing a subject that had stepped out of line. My heart pounds in my chest as I wait for Jack to confirm or deny my existence.

"Yes." I crumble to my knees, I want to cry or maybe I want to rip out my heart. "We can now confirm that Will Graham, the Ripper's first victim, is still alive." I bury my fingers into my hair, grab at clumps and try to not to scream my lungs out. Beverly's arms wrap around my body, tucks my hands against my chest and holds me still as I sob into her shirt, the TV continues on. "Is Mr. Graham in custody, Detective Crawford?" Freddie asks, her voice crisp and cutting, the question allows no way of Jack to lie or to manipulate his way out of answering, she is flushing him out into the open and with him she is also flushing me out. "No." Jack says, his voice and posture tense as he stares at the woman sitting in her throne, relaxed and unbothered by the threat she is becoming. "Was he not taken into custody originally when the Ripper had first attacked him?" She asks, her eyes twinkling on the TV screen, or maybe they're just blurred from my tears. "Yes." Jack says, sounding as if the admission chokes him by doing so. Beverly's grip loosens around my arms once she's sure I'm calm enough again.

"Are you saying that Will Graham escaped police protection, Detective Crawford?" She does very little to hide the delight in her voice as she continues to poke Jack's facade of calm and rationality, his eyes narrowing on the woman as he looks as if he's ready to launch across the room and kill her himself. "Yes." It grows closer to a growl, Beverly helps me onto the sofa and tucks me into her side as we watch the scene continue to unfold. My eyes draw to Hannibal every few seconds, he is an unchanged man since the last time I had seen him and even with Freddie's probing he gives nothing away, unlike Jack who looks as if he's ready to climb out of his skin. "Are you saying that Will Graham escaped police protection, Detective Crawford?" Her words are drawn out and deliberate as she throws her fiery main of hair over her shoulder and tilts her head to the left, studying Jack, challenging him to lose his temper with her. "No, I - " Jack begins but Freddie is ready for his deflection, his first and only attempt to retake control.

"Then how did Will Graham come to be at large? Is he an accomplice to the Ripper, Detective Crawford?" The offered theory makes the room around her come back to life, hands fly up faster and fingers twitch more urgently, voices yell over each other louder than the microphones can handle and the camera shutters snap harsh and more frequently than before. It's chaos and Freddie Lounds relishes in it. Delights even. I feel sick watching her, I feel sick watching the way Hannibal watches her with amusement, enamoured with how she plays the room just as he does. "*Are you setting Will Graham out to be bait, Detective Crawford?*" One voice yells, twisting my stomach as he does. "*Can you confirm that Will Graham was pregnant with the Ripper's child at the time of his arrest, Detective Crawford?*" Another yells, my emotions twisting at the mention of Mischa, I catch the sneer of Hannibal's lip at the same time, guarded and barely caught as everyone focuses on Jack and his lack of answers but I catch it just enough to *know.*

Finally Jack attempts to once again retake control of the chaos, this time succeeding only momentarily. "I cannot stand here today and confirm gossip and rumours that have been concocted by overactive minds and old wives tales. I assure the public that Will Graham is not being used as some sort of bait for the Ripper - " The room quietens as he speaks only for Freddie to pipe up again, smiling as if Jack had just signed off on his own death. "Then why have the authorities decided now is the time to release the information on Will Graham if it is not to see him put out as bait to the Ripper?" Jack looks at her with pure malice as he is forced to either backtrack or lie. "We have new information on the Ripper and with Will

Graham's assistance we can hopefully bring the man to justice once and for all, that is why we are asking Will Graham to come forward." It's a lie, I am being set as nothing more than bait. Some sort of pawn in Hannibal's ever sicker game.

"Is there - ?" Freddie Lounds goes to ask another question but Jack has grown tired of her games and speaks to the room instead of just to her. "This is an appeal directly to Will Graham, wherever he may be, that should he come forward now he would face no criminal charges in connection with the Ripper and would be granted full immunity from any court proceedings moving forward that involve the Chesapeake Ripper or any accomplices." Beverly takes my hand in hers and squeezes three times, a wordless attempt at reassurance. The TV comes up with my photo then, taken a couple of years ago, I'm grinning into the camera. I'm carefree and happy in the picture. My stomach turns at the sight. Information on who to contact pops up alongside the photo, I turn my face away from the screen.

"Will - ?" Beverly and I jump to our feet at the sound of his voice, he'd entered the room unnoticed, mugs of coffee in his hands for the three of us, Miles is staring at the TV with my face and my name on the screen.

The Clawed Monster Reaches His Prey In The Bleak Winter Night, With A Shattering Breath, Love Is Confessed Into The Pitch Black.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

They're like Michelangelo's David. Carved out of smooth marble, destined to be frozen in time in the places they all stand. A timeless moment in history.

Beverly and Will staring with horror-stricken faces at Miles. Miles staring with a mix of confused emotions on his face, each one more complicated than the last, staring at Will's face on the TV screen. Jack's voice the soundtrack to the horrific unraveling of each individual's life, as he reads out information on Will, numbers to call, places to go. It drones on like an endless buzz in the background. *Like nails down a blackboard.* All three frozen until Mischa comes skipping into the picture. Like a nail hammered into the center of a mirror, making cracks in every direction, allowing everything to become disconnected from each other. "Mummy's on the TV!" She announces happily, unaware of the horror unfolding on Will's face as Miles stares back at him now, broken from his trance from the TV screen. "Beverly, get Mischa out of here!" Will says, his throat constricted to the point his words come out as a strangled whisper of panic, Beverly moves without so much as a second's hesitation, jumping up soundlessly from the sofa and sweeping her goddaughter up in her arms in one fluid movement. "Come on, Pancake. Let's go see if we can find Winston." Her voice is normal, as if everything is normal. She's out of the room in seconds, the door closed firmly behind her. Leaving only Will and Miles in the room. They stare at each other. Will doesn't know what to say or what to do as he stares at Miles and watches as he becomes a stranger in the Beta's eyes.

"What's going on, Will?" Miles asks finally, his voice sounding flat and emotionless, so different from how Miles had always sounded to Will, it makes the Omega flinch away from him, drop his eyes in shame. "I - " Will doesn't even know what he can say? He's an Omega on the run? The Alpha he never talks about wasn't a deadbeat alcoholic like Will had always made out but rather a genius and serial killer? Will just stutters. Useless. *Hopeless. "What was that?"* Miles asks, his voice pressing against Will's struggling tongue. "Nothing. Miles, I - " He clamps his mouth shut when Miles cuts him off, his voice now furious. *"Don't* - !" Miles grits his teeth, squeezes his eyes shut and balls his hands into fists as he tries to cap his growing frustration to keep from saying something he doesn't mean in the pursuit of answers. "Don't bullshit me, Will. *Please.* Why is there some sort of appeal out for you?" He asks, looking past Will to the TV screen, squinting at the small print. Will rushes to turn the screen off, standing front of the now black screen as he struggles to keep his eyes on Miles. The

desire to run, to grab Mischa and Beverly and run from the Beta, from Jack and his appeal grows stronger.

"Don't start shutting me out. *Talk,* Will." Miles tries to drag him back to him, moving now towards the Omega, his eyes pleading with him to reconsider following his desire to run. Will steps back and sees the hurt it causes the Beta. *"Will?"* He pleads, softening his voice as he reaches across to him, his fingers hesitant touches on Will's limp hand. "The Ripper." Will says, finding his voice as he brings his glazed over eyes to focus on Miles' face. For a split second, as he stares into the Beta's face, he realises that it would have been better if Beverly *had* killed him.

"The Ripper?" He presses the realisation away from Will's mind. His words pressing against his mind. He doesn't understand. What Ripper? "The Chesapeake Ripper." Will says, his voice wavering as if one false move could send him shattering into a million little pieces, as if Will was no longer held together by a body but rather fragile crystal. Fragile crystal that Miles had too tight a grip on. "What about him? Have they found him? Does he *know* you?" The Beta questions, desperate for answers, for things to *make sense* as they did minutes ago when he had been in the kitchen with Mischa, laughing and helping her cut her food up. How normal everything had been. How long ago that felt now. "Mischa's father, my Alpha, he's the Chesapeake Ripper." Will says, the words taking flight past his lips. Miles stumbles back from him. Flees the room with a slamming door left in his wake.

Will.

I fall to my knees once Miles has stormed away. My insides feeling as if they're caving in on one another as tears fall down my face. My heart feeling as if its been torn into a million pieces and then torn into a further million. My throat constricts with silent sobs, my face hidden in the palms of my hands as my head becomes consumed with endless realities I now faced. Miles knowing. Jack looking. Hannibal closing in. Soon there would be no escaping, no more running and hiding. I don't know how long I had laid on the floor sobbing for before Beverly had come.

I didn't hear her enter the room but I felt her cold hands on my shoulder, firm and grounding as her voice gently called to me, tender. I fail to find my answering voice. "Will?" She says, hesitant as she tried to bring me to stand in front of her. I shrugged away from her touch, hoping that the shake of my head was not invisible to her. "Please - *Please,* Beverly, just leave me alone." I plead with her, the idea of facing anything more today a thought so horrific that giving myself up to Hannibal felt like a warm fantasy wrapping its arms round me in an icy winter night "Will, you have to get yourself together." She says, I know she says more but I don't listen. Just shake my head and hope she leaves. She doesn't, she tries to get me to my feet again. "Will." Insistent.

"Beverly!" My voice rises from my throat in a sudden fury. Shaking my head as I pull myself away from her touch, but she's never given up on me and she refuses to do such a thing now. Her palm meets my face in a graceful sweep, meeting my skin with a hard smack as she gets to her feet and drags me up with her. "It's Freddie Lounds. She's found us." I wish Hannibal was here all over again.

The Beta sits quietly on the bed of the Alpha to his lover, unaware of its history. His fingers twirl around the engagement ring he had intended to give the Omega on New Year's Eve. A matter of weeks from now. His gut twists at the thought, how strange it felt to him now to think of a future with Will. To think he could have *known* the Omega so wholly to be able to *want* a future with him. He feels like a fool thinking of a future with him at all before today. How could he have been so blind? To have failed to see past, the lies Will had fed him for years now? He twists away from the thought, like an elk from a hunter in the woods. The ring sits heavy between his fingers. The engraving of his love for the Omega catches the dwindling light and a wave of disgust rolls around his stomach. It had been hours since he'd left Will in the living-room. Hours since he had discovered the truth. Hours of sitting in a silent home that was not his, nor was it Will's. Hours spent in inaction. Sitting and passively drowning in his thoughts that grew from wild accusations to grotesque realities.

Miles had intended to book a one way flight back home when he had left Will, but had failed to get past the lock screen of his phone. The family photo of the three of them had stared mockingly up at him. Mischa sat grinning between Will and himself, he had been overcome with horror and disgust at the sight. How could such a sweet creature such as Mischa be the product of a man capable of so much evil? The Ripper had not lived outside of Miles' world. The Beta had seen the endless hunt play out before him for years now, the endless cat and mouse games played with the authorities. The headlines and articles and careers made or broken out of the carnage the Ripper left in his wake and now - Now Miles couldn't look at the sweet little girl he had always considered his own without the taint of such atrocities clouding her very being. He couldn't help but to wonder if one day she would turn from her sweet innocence to the incomprehensible evil of her natural father's nature? Would she one day destroy lives so similar to her mother just like the Ripper? The Beta could not stand the thought and had thrown his phone far from himself to escape such rabbit holes to fall down. His head had fallen into his hands and he had sobbed like an Omega cub for his mother at the thoughts. The ring had been found from its hiding place only when Miles had found the strength to search for the sleeping pills he had packed. In his search the ring had been discovered and had pushed all thought of unconsciousness away.

How could he have been such a fool? How could Will have made him such a fool? And Beverly, she had known everything all along, had masqueraded around Miles with Will, the Beta couldn't help but to feel a sudden wash of bitterness. Had they laughed at him? For his stupidity? His blindness? Had they planned to use him all these years? Or was it simply a happy coincidence? The thoughts leapt from one to another. Suffocating the Beta until a single timid knock on the closed bedroom door knocked away all the thoughts and left his mind empty for the first time in hours. "Miles?" Even his voice sounded different now. Twisted and conniving. The door is pushed carefully open when Miles does not answer Will's call.

"You never told me." Miles says quietly when the Omega has stepped inside the bedroom and has pressed the door shut behind himself. It's not accusatory. It is simply fact. "Miles - " Will begins, his voice verging on a tremble as he does. "Will, we were suppose to have a baby." The Beta says, his eyes focused on the ring rolling around his fingers, tears falling freely to the floor, Will struggles with his opposing desires to comfort the Beta and to run and hide from him. "We *were* a family. We were meant to *have* a family. Were you really never going

to tell me?" He looks up at the Omega and founds the answer without needing Will to say it for himself, he feels a bitter desire to enact revenge on the man. "Did you really think you *could never* tell me?" Will nods his head with a solemn look of shame as Miles scoffs and nods his head to himself, sniffing as he wipes at his eyes. He feels a fool for crying. Feels too vulnerable. "I'm sorry." Will's voice comes out with an uncharacteristic tinge of neediness and terror, Miles looks at him and sees such emotions burning in his eyes behind the protective shield of his glasses. "You're sorry I found out. Not for lying." His voice is devoid of resentment. Empty of anger or hurt or hate. It is a simple tone of resignation. He gets to his feet as he drops the ring to the floor. It clings lowly. "Miles, please?" He doesn't know what he's asking for. He doesn't want to ask him for anything but he has to. For his daughter, for himself, he *has* to fight.

Tear Apart & Scatter My Love For You, I Would Still Not Fail To Protect You.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

The ring feels like a cavernous hole between them, threatening to deepen into infinity and tear them apart forever if they let it. Will stares at it with a shameful guilt that fails to come from what he had done to Miles but rather what he had done to Hannibal by being with Miles. It turns his stomach and he has to look away from the ring to escape it. Although the shadow of the feeling clings to him like sweat after a run or a bad nightmare. How he wishes he could simply wake and find none of this to have ever taken place. Miles doesn't speak or acknowledge him as he finishes packing. Searching out his passport as the final thing needed before his departure. Will watches him. A silent hourglass running out around them, threatening to consume them with glass and sand. "What am I meant to tell Mischa?" It's such a low blow that Will feels immediately disgusted that he even asked, catching the sneer of Miles' face as he throws his now found passport onto the bed besides his suitcase.

He shrugs his shoulder as he zips his luggage up. Will nods his head, almost to himself as he wipes the freshly fallen tears from his cheeks. Sniffing as he rubs his hands over his face. Trapped in a never ending nightmare. "I'm sure you'll think of something. After all, you seem to have quite a skill for deceiving those you supposedly love." Will takes his words, each syllable wrapping itself around his body and squeezing until he felt as if every bone within him had shattered and his organs reduced to pulp. He stares at Miles with glassy eyes and tear wet cheeks. The bite of his words cut at the already frayed edges of Will's being. "She loves you." Will says, as if Miles doesn't already know, as if it would make a difference. Will feels a familiar hopelessness in the pit of his stomach knowing that it doesn't make a difference, to either of them.

The Beta inhales deeply as he stands in front of his packed suitcase, on the cusp of leaving. Of being free. The scent of the room is a mix of him and Will. Of the brief nights they'd spent lying in this bed together, his body betrays him with feelings of sorrow and heartbreak, of love not quite dead. "Don't - " Miles thinks better of his words. Shaking his head as his lips fall closed, tightly sealing in the words he meant to say. The foul accusations, the harsh insults that he did not mean. Will stares at him, pleading. "Please?" A final pleas that Will had no way of knowing whether it would work or not. It's the final straw, the last chance to leave without a fight and it goes up in flames around them. Draws out the Beta's anger as he throws the suitcase across the room, furious and violent as it collides with the wall and breaks open. "PLEASE, WILL? PLEASE, WHAT?!" His voice raises without warning, collides with the walls around them and becomes magnified. He grabs his face into his hands, screaming

briefly before throwing them down again. Glaring at the Omega staring back at him. "You need the police, Will!" His voice pitches to a yell again, the Omega failing to flinch away from the Beta. He would have, if he had feared what Miles would do but he doesn't. Knows ultimately that Miles was not the threat closing in on him. "I can't." His voice comes as a fracture into the space between them. Miles can't help but to stare at him. As if he wasn't the man he had known, had planned to marry and have children with.

"Why *can't* you?! They can protect you, Will!" His voice is frustrated, like a man pushed to the brink facing the final brick wall before he pulled the trigger or sought revenge. Will helpless to make him understand. How could he hope to understand when he had only just learnt the tip of the iceberg? "They'll never be able to protect me." Will says, watching as Miles stares into the abyss of the paradox that surround them. "What are you talking about?! They're the *police!* Of course they'll protect you!" His gestures grow wild, as if throwing his hands up and pacing and raising his voice would make Will see sense. Acting as if he could clear the debris around them keeping Will's line of reason covered and camouflaged. Will looking at him as if he could see how beyond salvaging they both were. Thinking of the gun Beverly had hidden for him before Mischa and Miles stepped foot across the threshold. The object remaining stowed away inside the room with them. "He's a part of it." His voice is calmer now as he climbs to his feet from where he had sank to the floor in front of the door leading out to the rest of the house. His movements echoing the same fragility as a newborn animal taking their first hesitant steps. "He'll catch us if we do, if he doesn't already know where we are." He edges round to the bed. Miles staring at him. Will thinks about the message Freddie Lounds had left him as he stands besides the bedside table. "Will," Miles says, moving now. "Will, look at me!" He walks round the bed, closing the abyss between them, Will looks through the first drawer, ignoring Miles. "Look at me!" His face is suddenly gripped between Miles' hands, his face turned harshly towards Miles. The two of them staring into each other's eyes, searching for some sign of salvation from the other. There is nothing but the emptying hourglass. "This is crazy, okay?" He says, snapping out of the trance, his hands still gripping Will as the Omega's hand searches the second drawer. "You have to go to the police!" Will finds the gun, hidden beneath random papers of no importance. His fingers wrap around the cold grip. "Miles - " His eyes lock with the Beta's.

Miles eyes widen and his grip on Will's face loosens, he stumbles back from him and stares, as if seeing a monster stood bare before him. Will stares back. "Is that why we're here?" It's like a rush to the head when you stand up too quickly. Miles' head connecting the dots all too slowly. Only just beginning to understand, *to see*. "Is that why Beverly showed up out of the blue? Because he found her?" He tries to think rationally but his head buzzes from one thought to another too quickly. He doesn't notice how Will holds the gun in his hand now, hidden still within the drawer but no less than a threat to his life than if it were pressed to the base of his skull. Will's finger around the trigger. "He was going to kill her." His voice wavers as he speaks, the thought of losing Beverly - He couldn't imagine it. "He's got the police eating out the palm of his hand, Miles. If I hand myself in - " He chokes at the idea and shakes his head, fighting back the newly falling tears as he sets his jaw, setting his mind against the idea. "I'll never escape him." He shakes his head. No longer sure if he would escape him even without the help of metal bars and chains. No, he could not go back to him, Will thinks with the accompanying roll of repulsion deep in his stomach at the knowledge that only a part of him believes what he was telling himself.

"What're you going to do? You can't just run for the rest of your life!" Miles steps closer to Will again, as if to hold him and Will hates how his body is torn between wanting Miles' touch and despising it. "I don't know what else I can do," The waver of his voice returns and reveals the youth that was so easy to overlook within the Omega. How young he truly was. Miles only wants to comfort him now, protect him. The natural instinct whenever an Omega showed distressed. How could he leave Will now? He thinks looking at him, at the mess of their bedroom. "What happens to Beverly if you run? To Mischa? *To me?* What if he catches you?" Will's hand shakes around the gun, the barrel would be full, prepared by Beverly. He could knock him out with the weight of the magazine, he wouldn't have to kill him. Simply knock him out and leave before he came round. "He wouldn't kill me." He's confident about that. Hannibal wasn't hunting Will in the hopes of eating him, at least not in *that* sense. "If I run he might leave you alive, Beverly alive. What else am I mean to do?" It's a genuine question that neither has an answer for nor does it fit the current conversation. Neither man knowing what to say or do. They remain fixed opposite each other, watching. Miles torn between leaving and staying and Will torn between the trigger his finger could so easily wrap around or the magazine that could easily knock the man standing opposite him out. The decision is made when a door in the distant downstairs bangs shut after silently falling open.

"Mummy! Mummy! Mummy! Look what Beverly gave me!" The sound of her voice melts away their guards, refocuses their desires and their own thoughts and opinions into one simple duty; to protect Mischa. Miles moves first, abandons Will and his packed bags for the door, pulling it open and standing waiting for Will, offering his hand to the Omega as he does. "There's another way." He says, a promise and vow. They would find another way. Will nods his head and swallows, blinking away the last of his tears as he discreetly leaves the gun within the drawer and moves to take the Beta's hand. They would find another way and if they couldn't, Will knew where Beverly had hidden his gun.

Will.

Miles collects Mischa in his arms, kisses her temple and laughs as she hugs and kisses him back. The scene plays out in slow motion in front of me. It looks as if nothing has changed between them but I catch the look he gives her when it's my turn to hug and kiss her. Glimpse the worry and the caution now present as he watches Mischa explain what Beverly had brought her while the two were out. Hot chocolate and cake that I would have said no to, Beverly looks unrepentant when I throw her a glance of disapproval for her spoiling. Rather she takes Mischa back from me and leads the four of us back into the kitchen. Remnants of breakfast still present. Looking at the unfinished food on the plates, the leftover pans I had used to make the batter in - Everything looks like a piece of history, frozen in time and untouched. But there is no dust covering the plates, no cobwebs in the corners. I collect up the dishes and make quick work of clearing everything up with Miles' assistance, Beverly keeping Mischa occupied by sorting out ingredients for dinner. I wonder if Hannibal would approve as I get the past from the back cupboard. My time spent with him as his -

He had cooked things designed for a palette far more sophisticated than mine but he never said as such. Encouraged me when I ventured to ask about a dish, an ingredient, of course we skated around the meats - I swallow thickly at the thought and pull the jar of ready made pasta sauce out from the cupboard besides the one I had retrieved the pasta from. I needn't

wonder if Hannibal would approve now, the sauce a clear decider that he would never dream of feeding himself let alone his own daughter something that was made from a jar. The thought brings a smile to my face, one which Miles catches and fails to return. I start the water for the pasta while he takes a seat besides Mischa and Beverly at the table. Beverly and Mischa talking with little input from Miles. I'm left wondering what Hannibal would talk to Mischa about. I could see the curiosity she got from him. I try not to think about what else she might have got from him too.

Prologue: The Story Of Freddie Lounds.

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year?

Without Beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Flashback

Freddie Lounds is twenty-two when she first hears of the Chesapeake Ripper, though he hadn't earned his title yet.

It being a morning too cold to venture out to the library round the corner from her apartment, the Omega had started working in her bedroom instead. Perching cross legged in the center of her bed with papers spread all around her. All relevant to the current case she was covering. A string of grisly murders involving an unidentified assailant who had developed a penchant for going about murdering teenage male Betas and leaving their bodies on the doorsteps of churches all over the city with their eyes cut out of their sockets and sewn into the palms of their hands. The police were closing in but not fast enough to stop the murders and force the killer into hiding. It was a goldmine in terms of publicity and Freddie had fought her superiors tooth and nail to cover it. Of course once she had started to untangle the web of murders she had discovered that many of the details around the victims and possible suspects were being kept from the public. Cover ups, past run-ins with the law, there was suddenly an endless stream of evidence to support a variety of theories surrounding the case. From trafficking rings to thrown out court cases. A rabbit hole that Freddie had willingly thrown herself down in the pursuit of the truth and the cold hard facts. These cold hard facts surrounded her now. Throwing her mane of red hair over her shoulder as she began reading another witness statement that had been 'lost' in the system involving the disappearance of the latest victim. This is where she first discovered the Ripper.

The radio that had been gifted to her by her father upon her departure to attend college in a different state four years ago was the catalyst to the discovery. The radio residing on the only part of Freddie's desk not covered by newspaper clippings and past police reports, sealed files and NDAs. The radio was playing lowly since she had awoken and started working. The rhythms of the 80s keeping her company as she focused on her paper trail which was pinned together only by bits of tape and old thumbtacks. The music broke for it's usual news bulletin with nothing out of the ordinary being said at first. Traffic, traffic accident. Celebrity jargon, celebrity scandal. Politics, political scandal and then her interest was piqued. An appeal given at the very end, not unusual as it was a local radio station Freddie was listening to and if they were given a request from police or even a concerned family member then they put it out at

the end of the bulletin, but the appeal was less that usual. An appeal for a missing male Omega by the name of Will Graham requested by the authorities.

Freddie noted down the information given on the appeal on a piece of paper scribbled with old notes. Last known whereabouts, age and physical description. The bulletin ended with the reporter hoping for a swift recovery of the Omega and then the music came back on but Freddie was quick to scrabble up from her bed and switch it off. Taking a thumbtack from the small container full and pinning the piece of scribbled information up on the wall besides her desk, studying it as she grabbed fistful of her hair and began to pull it up into a haphazard bun. A missing Omega always piqued the interest of the authorities before any missing Alpha or Beta ever would but it had barely been a day since his apparent disappearance, an appeal being sent out so soon was less than the norm - She stopped herself from becoming sucked into a new rabbit hole. She would investigate later, she promised herself, but for now she already had a rabbit hole to fill.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for such a long bloody wait for a new chapter but I hit a major writing block across all my works and I didn't want to force something out that didn't feel right so here we are... At a compromise? It's the start of the sticky chapter but I want to put something out as I do really love this story and want to show everyone what's in store! And that it has by no means been abandoned!! I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy and I am so thankful for all the feedback on this work that I've gotten since posting! Thank you all so much for the support!

TDMW.

The Story Of Freddie Lounds I.

Chapter Summary

Act one.

Chapter Notes

Apologies if this is a hot mess, I tried!

Without Beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Flashback

Freddie Lounds is twenty-three when she witnesses the Ripper's only loss in the game of love and war.

The young Omega had finished her cover of the Beta Church Killer a week after first hearing the appeal. It was the usual spiel asking for Will Graham to make contact or for whoever was holding him captive to return him safely home. The man reading the appeal had crackled over the old radio her father had given her. Once she had submitted her work on the BCK case she was awarded coverage of the Will Graham case as it progressed, per her own request.

The months that passed between Will Graham's disappearance and the FBI's recovery of him was a time rife with rising tensions between the media and the investigating officers. Any missing Omega case attracted a fair bit of reporting but Will Graham's case had been astronomical in comparison. The tensions between the media and authorities were at a constant increase with paranoia around leaks growing with each passing day that Will Graham remained missing. The public quickly grew hysteric which fast became crippling with the BCK case and aftermath so fresh a memory in everyone's minds.

The reporting among the press alone had been enough to scaremonger the general public into locking their doors at night and going out in groups to even the most public of places. Self-inflicted curfews came into effect among a vast majority of the Omega community and tensions continued to spike every day the culprit at the hand of Will Graham's disappearance had not been caught and the Omega himself remained at large. The unspoken fear that Will

Graham's disappearance was not an isolated incident on serving to spread the paranoia amongst the public.

The phantom feels of an invisible clock counting down the days until another Omega was reported missing under the same circumstances. Hospitals became a disputed place of fear and safety. Could a doctor be trusted? A nurse? They were thoughts at the forefront of everyone's minds, even if it did remain too taboo of a subject to leave their tongues waiting in sterile waiting rooms of hospitals and clinics.

Freddie Lounds remained relentless in her coverage of the Will Graham mystery despite the frenzy surrounding it.

First canvasing the dozens of officers that had been assigned to the case, looking for the Achilles heel in Jack Crawford's otherwise seemingly impenetrable investigation, which she found a few days into being assigned the case. All it took was a few cheap drinks over dinner and one fuck later and Freddie had gotten more information in a matter of hours than an entire slew of her peers had in weeks.

The Omega's next point of focus was on Will Graham himself. An investingation into his past having seemed to be overlooked by her peers and even the FBI which meant much remained unknown about the missing Omega. Will Graham's name may have been on the tips of everyone's tongue but he had become little more than a missing face since his disappearance. Freddie Lounds had made it her mission, and had succeeded, into making him so much more than just a face on the back of a milk carton. She had started with his family, discovering only deceased blood and frail neighbouring minds holding faded memories of bygone frosty holidays and hot summer evenings of a young adolecent who had always laughed and smiled. It had been a maze of dead-ends after that with the only pathway leading a straight path right back to the start.

Will Graham held no skeletons in his eighteen year closet, but Freddie Lounds was never one to shy away from a challenge and she was never one to shy away from a fabrication or two either. It was a necessary in her line of work. A tool to her as much as a scalpel was to a surgeon.

His past, which had formerly been full of deceased relatives and frail former neighbours, now became full of skeletons with vicious bites and nasty lies. Once Freddie's fabrications became woven into the foundations of what the public knew of Will Graham, their sympathy became their judgement. The missing Omega became little more than a character of judgement, of old Omega and Beta women clicking their tongues in distaste with scornful shakes of their heads for the Omega 'who had clearly brought it all on himself with a past like *that.'* But while the public's hunger for the sordid history of Will Graham became momentarily sated, Freddie Lounds' own hunger only became more prevalent.

A hunger to know why the Omega with a clean history would be taken. What had made him so much more special than all the other countless orphaned Omegas of the world? Omegas who would be missed far less than the likes of Will Graham; an FBI prodigy no less. The deeper Freddie Lounds went in an attempt to uncover the answer to this question the stranger Will Graham became. The connections that attached themselves to him became stranger too. But these connections never went further than a few turns before coming up against a brick

wall, as if someone was covering up any avenue that would lead to them. It slowly became Freddie's obsession. Fascinated by the mysterious figure lurking in the shadows, sure that they were watching her just as much as she watched them. The Will Graham case nearly consumes her whole life. Until it spits her and the world out with Will Graham's sudden return.

He was found by accident, truth be told.

A rookie FBI agent had been asking around about a possible eyewitness report that suggested Will Graham had been spotted with an unidentified companion on the night of his disappearance. He'd been missing for months by now and the tip had been overlooked on the night due to understaffing; Jack Crawford had gone ballistic when he found out.

He ordered a search to be carried out immediately and Miriam Lass was swept away with the order.

She was Jack Crawford's new prodigy.

The replacement Will Graham.

The original Will Graham had been snatched away and the Alpha had been quick to give the mantle to the promising Beta woman. Strictly speaking, Lass wasn't even meant to be on the case as she hadn't qualified yet but Jack Crawford could see her potential and was running out of time. The decision to put Lass out in the field that night would haunt him for the rest of his years, not that Freddie Lounds knew that.

It's unclear where Lass had found Graham that night, extensive searches done after had never turned up any evidence or indication, and even Freddie's own investigations had not turned up any new evidence.

Miss Lass had returned to Jack's office, suffering excessive injuries with a hysterical but otherwise unharmed Will Graham in tow. She collpased once Jack had walked into his office to find the two of them. Will Graham was taken to a facility for treatment and questioning and Miriam Lass was placed under twenty-four hour protection whilst hospitalised for her injuries. She was placed into a coma for the duration of her hospital stay after which she was deemed recovered enough and placed in protective custody from which she disappeared from shortly after, never having the chance to give a recount for how she had found Will Graham or who had been holding him captive and if this captor was her attacker.

Miriam Lass' involvement in the recovery of Will Graham was buried to keep the public hysteria to a minimum and to keep from jinxing the wave of good press the FBI were reciving off of the back of Will Graham's recovery. As a result the FBI remained tight lipped on Will Graham and his following *unexpected* demise. Jack Crawford had declined to give any information other than what was strictly necessary. He revealed that the Omega had been recovered by an unnamed FBI officer, who was in protective custody. Will Graham was being held in a maximum security Omega facility to be assessed and questioned in their continuing search for the yet-to-be identified culprit, this facility is where Will Graham had seemingly submitted to his various injuries sustained during his captivity and died.

That was the official statement delivered from Jack to a room full of well trained reporters. There was a frenzy of course, what if the attacker striked again. Who would he strike if he did? Was Will Graham just an unlucky Omega or was there something much darker lurking in the innocence of his face that had something to do with his mangled past? A month passed and the frenzy calmed, and then another month came and went and there was still no news on a missing Omega or the attacker. Life returned to normal three months after news of Will Graham's death had been fed to the public.

Jack Crawford knew better than to believe this was the end of the tale however and so did Freddie Lounds.

The Omega woman had found the redacted files and the hushed rumours surrounding Will Graham's recovery all thanks to the Achilles heel that Jack had yet to notice in his team of inscrutable agents. Freddie Lounds' interests in the Will Graham case were nurtured into a fresh obsession that had once been shared with the public but now felt like a distant memory, a bad dream in a stormy night. Something easily forgotten in the sunshine and peace of every day life. Still, Freddie Lounds knew, even if there was nothing to support such beliefs, that Will Graham remained at large and the monster who had first attempted to claim him for themselves was still at large also, waiting and plotting to strike again.

And when it did, Freddie Lounds would be there with her camera and her notepad and pen. *Waiting.*

Chapter End Notes

Beta Church Killer = BCK

The Story Of Freddie Lounds II.

Chapter Summary

Act two.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

Flashback

Freddie Lounds is twenty-four when she witnesses the Ripper's vengeance and the earning of his crown.

It's a little over a year since Will Graham's original disappearance, where he had arrived for a routine hospital check up and disappeared without ever reaching the exit, leaving without a trace as to where he could be.

It's a year to the day that he was found and lost again by the FBI rookie that had been burried alongside Will Graham. The one year anniversary of the most famous case in Jack Crawford's career history.

A year since the world was told Will Graham had perished at the hands of his captor.

It's just like any other day, at least from the surface. The weather was unseasonably warm and the sky was a sunny cloudless baby blue. The mail was delivered on time with the newspapers and various subscriptions one may acquire over time. Neighbours chatted on doorsteps and children were walked to school. A normal day. It's what's on the tip of the mailman's tongue, what was printed on the front pages of the newspapers and written inside the subscriptions, the whisperings between neighbours that revealed the true significance of the day.

The Omega had made the decision to work from home far in advance of the anniversary. Choosing to chase leads on her newest story whilst comprising a short piece on Will Graham, an obligatory remembrance to a life lost so young and so horrifically yada yada. Freddie had made the decision to avoid sitting in her office surrounded by the wagging tongues of her fellow colleagues, not that they didn't believe Will Graham had perrished.

Freddie Lounds' opinion that the Omega was in hiding and still very much alive had been an unchanged belief of hers in the year that had passed. However a job's a job so she writes Will Graham's tribute in-between her morning coffee and collecting her mail. She makes a point of avoiding the mailman in the process, of avoiding the chattering neighbours and parents walking home after the morning school run.

She glances over the letters as she retreats back to her kitchen. Nothing piquing her interests as she sits at her breakfast table with a uninterested huff. Taking up her coffee she resigned herself to filter through the newpapers and magazines that sat utouched besides her letters, sure to be filled with Will Graham-centric stories. The core story remained unchanged, no matter how much it had been rewritten in the year that's passed. Will Graham was dead and his murderer remained but a ghost on the lips of gossiping neighbours. Jack Crawford and his team had been forgotten for their incompetence and remembered for their bravery, as every media outlet other than Freddie's had dubbed it; for searching for Will Graham so tirelessly with little thought to their own safety.

Freddie couldn't help the sneer on her lip at that last part. Jack Crawford was an obsessed Alpha when it came to Will Graham, there was nothing brave in that.

As if to shake off all thoughts of Jack Crawford and his glorified incompetence, Freddie Lounds drew out her morning paper and unfurled the front page where, to Lound's mixed shocked horror and intrigue, the front page was no longer holding its usual spread of rehashed quotes and photos, no weeping tributes to Will Graham and how his life had been snatched from him so young. There was nothing of that now. No. Today the big story was all about Jack Crawford and a murder.

As if it could tell what she had just read, Freddie Lound's mobile began to vibrate from its place on the kitchen counter, jumping her from her thoughts and the front page of the paper. She picked the phone up on the second ring and was summoned into work. She had been handed the case without question from her superior.

Flashback

Freddie Lounds is twenty-four when she meets the Ripper's design.

The Alpha had always been aware of her, ever since the start of his games with his Omega. Aware of TattleCrime.com, the festering home of her poor exucse of journalism. Backstabbing and treachery, Hannibal thought, were the foundations in which a creature like Freddie Lounds had been borne to. He had watched the vulturous journalist's deft fingers from afar as they slated his love. Fabrications of instability and promiscuity had become synonymous with his dear Will's name in all that time the FBI had searched for him and for what? So the fattening swine could climb a few feet up the rotting ladder of her chosen career. Hannibal had fought wrath worthy of the gods to keep himself from striking down the fiery redhead where she had sat writing her poisonous lies about his love. He had bigger plans to enact before taking her off to slaughter.

Hannibal could not deny that putrid creatures such as Freddie Lounds have their uses. The Omega was a fascination, even if Hannibal despised her every breath. Loose ends were

Freddie Lounds' second home. A blood hound, Hannibal thinks as he watches her throughout the initial investigation once he had finally brought Will home to where he belonged, sniffing out all the FBI's weaknesses and the kinks in the Jack Crawford's armour. Watches the way she puppeteers Jack and the rest of them, bends them to her will. The Alpha admires her craftsmanship even if there is no honour in her field of work. He cannot deny the grace that she encompasses.

Of course Hannibal knew the reality of asking a creature such as Freddie Louds for assistance. Doubtless that she would turn new fabrications on the Alpha once he had served his purpose to her but Hannibal was not a fool and Freddie Lounds was not the most sly fox he had let into his hen house, nor would she be his last.

The Story Of Freddie Lounds III.

Chapter Summary

Act three.

Chapter Notes

Timelines are catching up?
Yeah I didn't think I would take this long for a new chapter either but y'know I genuinely enjoyed writing it so I hope you enjoy reading it.

Without Beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Flashback

Freddie Lounds is twenty-five when she does the Ripper's bidding.

It had taken her longer to pick out a mug for her morning coffee than it had to track down the missing Alana Bloom. A few favours pulled from here and there and she had the exact location before her coffee had even poured itself from the little machine, which she had been gifted by her mother last Christmas, out into her awaiting mug. Hannibal Lecter had been clear in his instructions; find Alana Bloom and she would deliver Beverly Katz and Beverly Katz would reveal Will Graham.

Freddie had already started her exposé into the tangled secret lives of all parties concerned, not that Hannibal needed to know that… *Yet.*

She settles at her kitchen table with her coffee in hand and looks over the information delivered on Alana Bloom.

The people who had assisted Freddie in her search for Bloom had told her that paper trails would always be a messy leftover in any context but especially when fleeing the police and the country. Ms. Bloom and her wife and son were hiding out in a small village in the countryside of the United Kingdom, rural and delightfully dull with a small population of yummy mummies and retired couples with grown children and young grandchildren who came visiting on the weekends for tea and cakes and a day spent gossiping.

Alana Bloom and Margot Verger blended in as if they had lived there their entire lives.

Of course, people generally could blend in anywhere they liked when they had more money to burn than they would ever need use of. The paperwork for a refurbished cottage had been discovered buried within expenses on pig breeder advisors, but even then it had been difficult to follow the trail directly to Bloom but the Omega had managed to do so, after several favours and a few days. She flew out before Jack Crawford's publicity stunt, watching the Alpha's last attempt to appear in control of Will Graham's disappearance and the growing unrest surrounding the Chesapeake Ripper was an experience Freddie Lounds did not want to miss.

Hannibal Lecter had kept a happy distance from her after they had struck up their unlikely alliance, intending to continue to do so until she had found what he had asked her to. She hadn't told him about finding Alana, preferring instead to confirm that her whereabouts were genuine rather than make promises to the wrong people and Hannibal Lecter felt like the most wrong of all to break promises to, at least while he was still a benefit to her.

She spent the night in a hotel before driving into the village Alana Bloom was thought to be hiding out in. The address she had been given for Alana led her to a cottage in a nice suburb full of open driveways and children playing in the streets. It was a sight taken straight from a children's book and it all felt terribly orchestrated.

As if Freddie were walking into some sort of ambush.

The outside of Alana Bloom's home was an aesthetic of old English money, stone walls and rose bushes.

Playing with toy trucks in the front garden was a little boy with dark curls and ruddy cheeks, he was babbling away and Freddie Lounds knew that he would not be left unsupervised for long. The front door of the large cottage left open in a complacent act of comfort and assurance that they would be safe from the monsters of the world here.

Lounds moved like a fox unperturbed by the closed garden gate and approached the boy with a relaxed friendly manner, her footsteps crunched along the frosty December grass. While she had no children of her own she was more than well versed in how to handle them.

"Are you Morgan?" The child looks up at her and studies like a curious child does, glancing back to his home in search of his mother. Freddie swoops her arms around his bundled body to keep the cold day out and holds him close to her chest before he can think to cry out.

"Where's mummy?" Freddie asks, smiling as she strokes his rosy cheek with her gloved finger.

"Morgan - ?" Alana Bloom stands frozen in the doorway of her home, a child's sippy cup in hand as she stares at Freddie Lounds holding her only son in her arms. The dark haired woman feels terror clutching her heart as Morgan waves at her from the lithe Omega holding him. Her fiery hair and green hat and gloves distinct against the boy's plum winter coat.

"That's it, Morgan. Say hello to mummy." She waves her own hand and Alana stares at the woman. Freddie Lounds had never struck Alana as being one of Hannibal's goons but with

her son now clutched in the woman's arms, she couldn't be certain of such a thing. Couldn't afford the luxury of such an uncertainty.

"What do you want?" Alana asks, swallowing down the demand for her child that rises alongside it. Demands never got results. Especially not from animals such as Freddie Lounds.

"Information." She says crisply.

"About?" Alana prompts, her eyes firmly on her son who was still clueless to the fact he should not be in the woman's arms, happy enough to be held with his truck still in his hands, a small mercy as Alana knew she would not survive his distressed cries.

"Will Graham. Where is he?"

"I don't know." Alana's lie is without hesitation despite already knowing there was no point in doing so. Whoever the woman was and whoever she was working for, Hannibal or Jack or someone else entirely, they already knew what Alana did, they only needed confirmation. There was no reason to bother her otherwise.

"Don't lie. I'm not here to play games, Miss Bloom and I don't think dear little Morgan here is worth Will Graham's whereabouts." The boy laughs as the woman tickles his belly, clueless of the threat to his life. Alana's stomach churns.

"You got lazy with your receipts, Miss Bloom." She says conversationally, adjusting the boy against her hip as she does, fixing her gaze to Alana.

"Everyone does." She sighs, tucking a curl behind Morgan's ear.

"People always do when they get away with whatever illicit things they've been doing for long enough." Alana wants to object but she knows the truth to the journalist's words. It was easy to fool yourself into believing you were safe if you remained invisible for long enough.

"I want the location and the *exact* address." Freddie says, adjusting Morgan against her hip.

"What will you do once you have what you want?" Freddie smiles and looks back to Morgan, brushing a curl from his forehead once more. Alana's stomach lurches at the sight but she remains fixed where she stood. She could not risk one foot out of line with her child in such a precarious situation.

"I will leave you and your family in peace." There's truth to her words but Alana doesn't care about truth.

"You won't tell - ?" Freddie Lounds cuts her off with a bored snap.

"Whoever you are hiding from is none of my concern." It was the truth to Freddie, Mason Verger was well known to have made plenty of enemies before his death, whatever ghosts had been left to haunt Margot and her family were none of her concern. She was not yet aware of how Hannibal's shadow loomed over them, even more so than that of Margot Verger's mad brother.

"Do we have a deal?"

Freddie.

It's over in minutes. Finishing with my placing of Morgan Verger down and walking away. His mother sobs with relief, grabbing hold of him. His small body is tight against her as I open the garden gate to make my exit. They were of no concern to me now. Dr. Lecter would have to wait for a report on their whereabouts. Bigger fish were circling the bait afterall and I had batter already made up.

I climb into my rental and pull out my phone, a glove still hanging from my mouth and the other discarded hastily on the floor. I type the number Dr. Bloom had given me into my phone. The address accompanying the number would be of use later.

Another piece in the ever twisting puzzle of Will Graham's disappearance finally found. The sky is still a brilliant blue overhead as I sit and think of all that I had discovered in such a small period of time. Not only had I found Dr. Bloom, but I had also taken another step closer to Will Graham.

I hesitate when my thumb lingers over the dial button. This was the closest anyone had come to finding him, to lose my footing now and give away my advantage would be a fatal error.

I delete the numbers one by one from my phone. I had already waited so long, a little while longer would not hurt. Besides, this was a far better way to make my *official* introduction to Mr. Graham and I knew two Alphas who would be the *perfect* leading ladies.

I turn the key in the ignition and make my way to the airport.

I have a plane to catch and a show to put on.

Phyllis 'Bella' Crawford was decidedly nothing like what Hannibal had considered her to be. She was not the kind of Beta to sit entitled and expect the world to come to her. She lacked the ill-fitting superiority that her husband carried like a badge of honour.

No, Hannibal had to rewrite his assumptions on the lithe Beta sitting across from him in his office. Jack had dropped her off, as agreed after the press appeal, and had left quickly after, Hannibal saw guilt on his face as he kissed his wife farewell. A rare expression worn by the Alpha.

"Aren't therapy sessions meant to be spent in conversation?" Bella asks, fidgeting in her seat after nearly the entirety of their one hour session had passed in silence between the two of them. Hannibal smiling and sitting further up in his chair just as Bella does.

"I can make idle conversation but it was your husband who asked for me to see you." She looks unimpressed with Hannibal's words. As if it would have been better of him to have given no reply at all.

"Why does your husband think you need therapy, Bella?" She smiles and shakes her head, smoothing out the white silk skirt resting against her legs again, *habitually* .

"I am dying, Dr. Lecter. Did my husband mention that?" Hannibal shakes his head, declining to admit that he could smell the reek of cancer in her blood from the moment he had opened the door to his office and greeted her. *Tainted meat.* She fails to look surprised at Hannibal's not knowing.

"He cannot face this *fact* and as he has work he cannot stand knowing I am alone all day, so, he comes up with these little ventures. As if they'll cure me." She glances at his eyes to make sure he is still listening. "Mondays are couples cookery classes, though Jack *never* shows up and I simply sit at the designated little square and drink."

"Tuesdays we spend with my sister and her children. He feels guilty for never giving me one, thinks I'm resentful." She adds as if commenting on the drapes. "And now *this* . Sunday spent with a man I do not know, talking about how dying makes me feel for an hour." She sighs as if exhausted and looks around the Alpha's office, searching for something more to add. She finds nothing and they fall back into silence. Her head held high.

"Are you?" Hannibal asks, amused by the Beta so unlike any other Beta. Maybe he and Jack had something in common after all. Finding things that behave in such an opposite manner from what's expected.

"Am I, what?" Bella asks, studying the Alpha in much the same way he studies her. But it's not like how he is usually studied by his paranoid and sick patients. No, Hannibal knows she really *sees* him, even if she doesn't realise it herself.

"Resentful." She looks amused, rolling her eyes with a tut similar to one given from a mother to a child.

"No." Hannibal returns the favour and smiles.

"Very convincing." She tuts again and folds her hands in her lap.

"I believe our hour is up, Dr. Lecter." It is Hannibal's turn to sigh and looks needlessly to the watch on his wrist, nodding his head once Bella's statement is proven correct.

"I will see you on Sunday, Bella." Hannibal says standing from his chair to see the Beta to the office door, the woman nodding her head with as much irony as the gesture allows.

"Sunday." She agrees.

It is only a moment after Hannibal has watched Bella drive away in her car and he has pressed his office door softly shut for the last time for the day that his phone begins to ring. He is being watched, he knows immediately as he crosses the room to collect the device from atop his papers.

"Miss Lounds," The Alpha greets. A curl of his lip reminiscent of a growl grows as he says the Omega's name.

“I trust you come bearing good news?” He knows she would not contact him, lest have him *watched* , if this was not the case.

“I've found him.” A wave of indescribable relief washes over the Alpha, so unexpected that he uses his desk to keep himself from falling down. The line crackles with silence as he processes this information. So quickly collected that he can hardly believe it to be true.

“Did you hear me?” Her voice hints at urgency. He composes himself and stands free from the support of his desk.

“Very good.” He says, as if praising a particularly slow child for finally learning what comes after B in the Alphabet. “And you're sure your contact is reliable?” He would devour her raw if there was even a slither of doubt -

“I don't mean to sound rude, *Doctor,* but I've been searching for Will Graham for years, I think I know the sounds of Bev - “ The house of cards crumble into dust.

“You’ve made contact?” The ice running down Lounds’ spine is almost audible.

“Y-yes.” She fails to sound impressive.

“Despite my request you do not approach?” His words are like the deadly hisses of a rattlesnake. His hand grips his desk, not to hold himself steady but to keep from crushing his phone.

“He doesn't *knowyou'reinvolvement* - “ She rushes, her tongue tripping gracelessly over itself. Her façade quickly broke away. Too quick to hide such from the Alpha.

“I'm afraid the damage is done, Miss Lounds.” He says finally, voice thick, barely keeping him from destroying every last thing within his carefully constructed office.

“ *Damage* ?” Her voice suddenly reveals her naïveté of the situation. The fickle nature of youth, the Alpha thinks before choosing his next words carefully.

“You've been a very rude Omega."

“Doctor Lecter - “

“Goodbye, Miss Lounds. *I'll be seeing you soon.* "

Chapter End Notes

Sorry if it doesn't make sense.

Epilogue: The Life Of Freddie Lounds, May Her Soul Rest In Peace.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Freddie Lounds is twenty-five when she learns the identity of the Chesapeake Ripper.

You've been a very rude Omega

The words echo through her head.

I'll be seeing you soon.

The last words Lecter had said to her.

Freddie wasn't stupid enough to think he was bluffing. But she hadn't come this far, spent so many *years* of her life chasing after Will Graham to let one last beastly Alpha stand in her way when so many others had already tried and failed.

No. Hannibal Lecter, just like all the other Alphas, would have to learn that Freddie Lounds was not one of *those* timid Omegas to be easily silenced and ushered into a quiet corner.

Still, she is silently thankful that she had made the call to Lecter once her plane had been called to board. Had she spoken to him in person… She turns the page on her language guide, leaving the thought behind. There was no point to torture herself. She looks out the window and admires the seemingly endless sky that surrounds her. A few hours more and she would have her final puzzle piece.

She would have Will Graham.

She sits at one of the three tables outside the tiny café.

Her red corkscrew hair pinned back with an elaborate dark green hat that highlights the pink tips of her ears and nose. Her glove clad fingers hold the large coffee cup as if it were the only heat source for miles. A part of her believes it after feeling how cold the inside of the café had been when ordering the coffee. She looked out of place at a table in front of the deserted café. Like a french model taken off of the front cover of a Vogue winter issue.

Her appearance distinctly says tourist.

Will can't help but to feel bemused that *she* had been the one to find him in the end. A part of him is entirely *unsurprised* that it was indeed the rude clickbait author to find him first.

She watches them both as they approach, false smiles and waves on their faces and fingers. *A group of old friends* , not two fugitives and a journalist.

Her eyes lock with Will's. Like a beast whose teeth were just beginning to sink into their prey's flesh. Will *hates* the reactionary skip of his heart.

"Will! " Freddie greets, a twinkle of delight in her eye as Will grudgingly allows her slim arms to wrap around him, the waitress inside already watching them, waiting for her moment to take their orders. He takes the seat opposite her as quickly as allowed. Avoids her eye as Freddie Lounds puts on just as much of a show for Beverly.

" *Beverly* !" Will smiles when he sees the venomous look Beverly manages to sneak to Lounds, who fails to look anything other than delighted.

"Miss Lounds." Will says stiffly, adjusting his glasses as he gets settled into the cold hard chair. He feels too exposed here but that's why she had chosen it.

" *Please* , call me Freddie." She says, smiling again as she looks between Beverly and Will, studying and collecting. Noting the absence of his daughter. There was a third party obviously involved. Taking care of the child while the two of them were here with her.

"Oh, I don't think so but thank you for the offer." Will says, clearing his throat as the waitress finally comes out of the café to ask if Will and Beverly would like anything.

Beverly orders two coffees for her and Will and acts as if the three of them are old friends catching up, Will is careful not to meet the eye of the waitress, to make an impression on her that goes no further than a nondescript customer. Will is surprised that Beverly orders in Lithuanian but keeps this to himself. Freddie finds it amusing watching how easily the two Omegas deceive and manipulate.

Masterminds in action! She thinks with the excitement of a child waking early on Christmas morning.

"I didn't know you spoke Lithuanian, Beverly." Freddie says once the waitress has retreated back inside, her own drink an inch from her lips as Beverly declines to respond.

"So, what can we do for you today, Freddie?" Beverly prompts instead, the redhead smiling back at the two sat across from her.

"It's more what *I* can do for *you,"* She says, talking to Will solely despite her eyes studying both of their faces. Beverly looks apprehensive, *stressed* even, as she tries to find how Freddie benefits from flushing them out into the open, but Will, he looks relaxed. *Happy almost.* Freddie would never admit how unnerving the sight was.

"Oh, please, you can't be serious?" He asks, a dry humourless laugh on his lips as he does, folding his arms over his chest as he tilts his head in the same way Freddie had done to him.

She looks at him outwardly unbothered by his attitude.

For the Omega to have lasted this long he had to have *some* bite to his bark.

"Afraid so," She smiles back, almost coyly. Will glances at Beverly through the corner of his eye and considers getting up and leaving, before he can reach his decision the waitress returns with their orders, effectively forcing him to remain seated. Leaving suddenly in front of the waitress would definitely leave an impression.

"Wouldn't you like to take out the Ripper once and for all? He nearly killed you, Beverly." Freddie continued once the waitress had returned inside. Busy now that her customers were catered for. Freddie throws a sympathetic look to Beverly as she takes a drink of her coffee.

Beverly crosses her arms over her chest and fidgets in her seat when the subject of Hannibal's attack comes to topic. She didn't like that Freddie seemed to know so much already. Beverly had been careful to keep an eye on the news in Baltimore for any word in the press of her attack but there had been nothing.

Jack had been careful to not only suppress Beverly's attack but also Hannibal's involvement and any hint of the mess relating back to the Ripper. Wherever Freddie Lounds was getting her information from it was from nowhere good, and that unsettled Beverly more than the knowledge than Hannibal was after her.

Beverly sweeps these thoughts away with a brush of her hair over her shoulder. Picking up her coffee to take a tender sip of the steaming liquid.

"Spreading idle gossip won't do anyone any favours, Freddie." She says, placing her cup back on the table, offering a small quirk of her lips to the woman sitting opposite her as she does. Freddie gives her quite the genuine smile in return.

"Will, wouldn't you like your side of the story told?" She asks, turning her attention from Beverly back to him once again, the same smile still on her lips as Will concentrates on the cup sat in front of him, thinking about Freddie and her obsession with the Ripper. She's been the one reporting on it from the word go. Always in the background, always throwing up an element of untold truth in every article she wrote.

"You called us *murder husbands* ," Will says, the hint of a frown tugging his brows together, looking at her now without the pretence of his glasses, his expression troubled in a unconventional way, she quirks her lips into a small smile. *Unrepentant* .

"A girl's gotta eat." She says unapologetically, Will sighs with a feeling of disbelief.

"You made it sound like we were in love." He adds, his tone growing accusatory, Freddie remains indifferent to the accusation and shrugs again, a subtle movement of her shoulders, staring back at Will just as intently as he is to her, yet his eyes remain elusive.

"Weren't you?" Her voice comes out in a lower tone, one that mimics the worthy vow of silence and trust from a confidant. Will breaks away from her. Refuses to answer the

question. Both for her and for himself, unwilling to face the reality that comes with the answer once he does. The consequences. *A Pandora's box opening.*

"Will you tell everyone where I am if I refuse to give you what you want?" He asks, leaning back in his chair, carding his fingers through his hair as Freddie smiles and takes the final drink of her coffee.

"No." She says truthfully. "I may be a bitch and I may not care for people but I'm not a murderer." She concludes, smiling up at the two Omegas who do not return such a look back.

"And revealing where I am would be murdering me, Freddie?" Will asks, his brows released from their frown now.

"No," Freddie allows.

"It would be more like signing off on your death certificate." She says thoughtfully, Will smiles without amusement and shakes his head at her.

"How poetic." She shrugs at him as she picks up her bag from beside her feet and looks through it for a moment before finding what she's searching for.

"My number, if either of you change your mind." She hands a card to Beverly and then to Will. Beverly examines the white card with gold lettering and smiles.

"Unlikely, but thank you." Beverly says, passing the card to Will, who sneaks it away into his jacket pocket.

“Your daughter’s beautiful, Will. I can see *both* her parents in her.” The last twist of her knife that she can’t resist. *The twist that would cost her life* , Will thinks.

He stares at her for a long while, fails to reply with anything, a puzzle thrown up into the air and the pieces falling into their destined places. He sees it all so clearly now, kicks himself for not seeing *his* involvement sooner.

“You really don’t want your daughter to meet her father, Will?” Freddie asks when there has been a long enough silence. She doesn’t know. *She wouldn’t still be breathing if she knew.*

“Do you really wish for the Ripper to hold so much power over you that you would sacrifice your daughter in doing so?” Beverly moves to lunge at her, Will’s hand grabbing at her arm to keep her from doing so. There was no point in wasting what little head start they still had on dealing with Freddie Lounds.

“The Ripper isn’t a phantom, Freddie.” Will starts, careful to hold her eye. Capture her full attention.

“He’s not a boogeyman parents tell their children about to keep them in line.” Lounds smiles, unmoved and defiant. Believing she was winning, unaware that she had never even crossed the start line.

“Then who is he, Mr. Graham? Who is this mere man that you’ve been protecting?” Will could laugh, perhaps he would never stop if he did.

“Tell me one thing, Freddie, and then I’ll tell you who the Ripper really is.” He leans in close to her now, drawing her in. Watching how her eyes practically light up at the prospect. Will’s voice so low and urgent. As if what he wished to say was far beyond any taboo she’d ever heard in her life before.

“ *Who fed you these pieces of information?* ” He falls back across the space, leans against the hard back of his chair and takes a long drink of his fast cooling coffee. Freddie Lounds stares at him. Cogs turning inside of her tiny mind, so loudly that Will can *almost* hear them.

“ *Whose been there every step of the way with you, Miss Lounds?* ” Her face pales, nearly as white as the snow surrounding them, dumbfounded and horrified.

Realisation soaks through her very being like a sponge absorbing liquid.

Will would find it satisfying if her realisation did not mean he was out of time.

“Ha-Hannibal?” There’s a shake to her voice that he never thought he would hear and it's as gratifying as he had hoped it would be. In the darkest part of Will’s mind he thinks that maybe this is a gift to him from Hannibal, to watch at least a part of the unravelling of such an unworthy Omega. He brushes away the thought as he nods to Beverly that it was time to go.

“I suggest you’ve been *very* lucky to not capture *his* wrath so far, Miss Lounds,” Will says, once standing and wiping away a few specs of snow from his glasses, Beverly counting bills for the coffee and a tip for the waitress.

“I sincerely hope you don’t find yourself in *his* company when that luck finally does run out.” He tucks away his glasses and begins to walk away.

“Goodbye, Miss Lounds." He calls to her as she watches him go.

“Goodbye, Will." She calls back.

The realisation of the magnitude of her situation runs like ice down her spine.

It had never been her whose teeth had wrapped around its prey’s throat; it had always been Hannibal’s wrapped around hers.

Will.

"Do you think she's going to tell them where we are?" We've been driving less than two minutes before Beverly asks the unanswerable question. Watching the road as we drive, my eyes are held on the road as I try to find the unknowable morals of Freddie Lounds.

"I don't know." I answer when minutes have ticked by in silence and we are closer to being back with Miles and Mischa.

"We have to go." She says quickly. Looking at me as if I would disagree. A crack between us nurtured by Freddie Lounds.

"You will have to take Mischa." I turn off of the road, taking the shortcut through the woodland to get back to the house. It's quicker by mere minutes but I want to be home. My skin prickles uneasily the longer I'm away from Mischa.

"Me?" Her tone is rich with disbelief. I nod my head, my grip on the steering wheel tightening.

"I'm not leaving you." Her voice snaps. I smile a little.

"You don't have a choice." The car bumps over fallen branches and crunches over the freshly fallen snow. Beverly stares at me as if I've grown to be a sick creature, perhaps I have.

"Yes, I do and it's to stay with you." She says, crossing her arms over her chest and sulking into her seat a little further, I get a glimpse of what it will be like with Mischa when she's older, when I have to pick her up from a party and reprimand her. I can't help but to smile but then I think of Hannibal and Miles and wonder when this is all over *who* will be the one waiting for us at home with their own reprimanding to do.

"If Hannibal is coming after me then I need to get Mischa as far away as possible." I say, pushing the thought away as we turn down a narrowing path that's thick with trees and low-hanging branches. The car gets along but only if you have the know-how.

"Will - " I shake my head and spare her a quick glance.

"Beverly. I don't want to argue, my face is all over the news, the papers, I won't be able to travel far enough before someone sees me and - " The reality of what will happen if I'm spotted isn't worth mentioning, we both know what will happen, I clear my throat and flex my hands around the steering wheel.

"You have to go without me." Beverly resigns herself from arguing against me, she knows just as well as I do that the only way to keep Mischa safe is to go our separate ways. Even if it is only for a few days, even if it is for longer than a few days. The thought claws an ugly mark against my heart.

"And if he doesn't come?" She's not happy to have conceded but I don't care, not right now, I only care about keeping her and Mischa safe.

"We find somewhere permanent to stay and you and Mischa go there first and I'll follow a few days later." It's a lie we can both see through but neither of us point it out. Whatever happens, I won't be joining them.

"And Miles?" The dreaded question with an even more dreaded answer. Another reason I want Mischa away.

"I'll deal with him. One way or another." I pull to a stop when we're outside the house, snow has started falling again.

"Will," Her tone has changed now, I wish I could shut my eyes and sink into an abyss.

"I know." I say, feeling exhausted as if I've just run miles through the snow.

"Okay." We get out of the car without anything more said between us. There was nothing more that could be said.

One way or another, Hannibal was coming for us. For Mischa. For *me.*

Freddie Lounds is twenty-five when she earns the wrath of the Chesapeake Ripper.

The harsh Lithuanian winter night is unlike anything Freddie Lounds has experienced. Perhaps heightened by fear laced in her being.

The howling wind rattles the frames of the hotel room windows; threatening to encroach on her warm space if given even half a chance.

Freddie Lounds, asleep in her bed, is awoken by the harsh ring of her mobile, which she had not worked up the courage to turn off. She reaches for it blindly, refusing to open her eyes as it continues to ring through the otherwise silent room.

The continuing harsh ringtone caused her to throw the covers back from over her head and look for it when her hand failed to succeed in finding it. She'd been in bed only a few hours before the phone had woken her, exhausted from her travels over the past twenty-four hours. From all that she had discovered.

She answers the call blind, without checking the id, rubbing her face as the windows continue to rattle along.

"Hello?" Her voice is scratchy with sleep. Her eyes drowsily attempted to stay open with little success.

"Miss Lounds." The hair on the back of her neck stands to attention at the sound of his voice, the desire to fall back asleep shrivelling up and dying in a dark corner within her.

"I hope I did not wake you." The false care to his voice makes her blood run as cold as the night outside. She climbs, *scrambles,* from her bed.

"No!" Her voice sounds distressed, she cringes as she begins searching through her closet for better attire than a pair of fuzzy trousers and matching shirt. She would not survive five minutes in the night dressed how she was.

"I was hoping we could re-discuss our last conversation." The deadly Alpha says casually down the phone, the suggestion anything but casual.

"Dr. Lecter," She clears her throat, clothes fall to the floor from where they hung in her closet.

"I thought we had finished our - " She looks around her as if he would be standing in her bedroom doorway. Relieved and surprised that he is not.

"Business together." A rich laugh falls eerily down the phone, Freddie Lounds feeling as if she had been thrown head first into an ice bath.

"Of course, I would like nothing more than to do so! But it's - " She pulls her phone from her ear and squints at the clock on her screen and cringes at the number that's read back to her.

"Four-thirty in the morning, *surely* waiting a few hours wouldn't hurt?" She pulls clothing she deems appropriate from her closet and moves back to her bed, throwing the jeans and long-sleeved top atop the messy covers as she waits for the Alpha's reply. She looks out at the pitch black of the night and wonders if the Alpha lurks in the icy shadows waiting for her.

No , she rationalises, there is no such noise in the background of his call.

"It is a rather pressing matter, wouldn't you agree Miss Lounds?" Her name rolls off of his tongue like a sneer and she feels sick at ever having trusted him.

She finds her passport and pulls on her boots, hoping he cannot hear her struggle down the silent line.

She throws open her hotel room door one she has her coat in hand, intent on running as far as the credit card and passport in her jean pocket would allow.

The scream on her tongue has no opportunity to be born by the time she sees him in the shadows.

Freddie Lounds is twenty-five when she dies.

Chapter End Notes

Porky Pig Voice That's all folks!

Loose Ends Tie Themselves With Pretty Bows That Become Like Nooses Around Their Throats.

Chapter Notes

I wouldn't necessarily call this chapter sweet but it is short!

Without Beta.

His phone rings - *Jack Crawford.*

He declines the call and puts the device on silent.

He had liked Bella, more than liked; he had respected her.

But she was not the first he had respected who had had to meet such an end and nor would she, Hannibal strongly suspected, be the last.

The events had unfolded quickly after he had dealt with Freddie Lounds. As if it had always meant to end this way right from the very start.

Bella had arrived at his office, half an hour into the designated hour, Hannibal could smell the drugs almost immediately, knew what the cunning Beta had done even without seeing the hood of her lids and the sluggish way her lips moved in greeting to him.

He allowed her to take her usual seat, watching carefully how her body melted to the leather, he offered a glass of water which she declined but took in her two frail hands out of politeness.

“Bella,” Hannibal began, taking the seat across from her, he did not bother to collect his notebook from his desk. “Have you been naughty?” She snorts and fixes her unfocused eyes on the Alpha. Unafraid, Hannibal could almost mourn her mind.

“Are you going to intervene?” She asks, setting the water on the side, missing the coaster entirely but Hannibal chooses to be lenient. It was only water after all.

“Is that why you came?” She smiles, thin and only half joyful. “I didn’t want to be alone.” She says, expression one of disgust, admitting to such a weakness like it was bitter on her tongue. A foul medicine to be taken twice daily with food and water.

“And now that you’re not? Do you wish for intervention?” Bella doesn’t answer, sinks deeper into the chair and slowly a look of resignation comes over her. Hannibal sinks back in his own chair, watching as the cocktail of drugs Bella took before her arrival works its way

through her system. He was running out of time if he was going to intervene. He was surprised by how he was still undecided.

“Tell Jack it’s not his fault, will you?” She requests when her lids become too heavy to lift and her once rigid posture has slouched. Hannibal says nothing, refusing to placate the proud Beta. She smiles thinly.

“Why do you hate him so much?” She asks finally, her tongue is sluggish but her words remain elegant despite this. Hannibal is surprised by her words. Surprised that the Beta had such an opinion when so many others did not. His fingers twitch to pick up the phone.

“Didn’t think I’d notice? Too simple of a Beta?” She laughs, it’s heavy and hoarse. Hannibal leans and picks up the phone.

“Don’t.” She’s almost begging, frowning, an almost limp arm reaching out to protest. Hannibal hesitates again. “This will destroy him, Bella.” Fingers hovering over the digits that would save her but only if he acted quickly. She doesn’t react as he had expected, there was no remorse or guilt or waiver of relenting. Hannibal allows a small quirk of his lips to show. Understanding finally coming to the Alpha.

“You despise your husband that much, Bella?” She inhales sharply and with effort opens her heavy lids to fix her unfocused eyes on Hannibal. “He destroyed me.” Resentment and revenge and silent rage; all such simple things in marriage.

“He chose Will Graham over you.” Hannibal agrees and she laughs.

“There’ll always be another.” She tries and fails to sit straighter in her chair, the time is coming now. Bella’s eyes shut once more, her body becoming limp. The window to intervene closing in front of them both.

“First it was Miriam Lass.” Hannibal almost snarls at the name. “Then it was Will Graham.” Her gaze falls to Hannibal a final time, iris’ cloudy and pupils dilated. She was gone, her pulse just needed to catch up.

“And there’ll be someone else after Will, Hannibal. As long as Jack breathes there’ll always be someone else.” She winces and Hannibal places the phone down and comes to kneel at her side, taking her stiff hand into his.

“It’s time to rest now, Bella.” He soothes, allowing the Beta comfort in her last moments. Breathing becoming shallow and wheezy as he caresses her cheek, allows her to pass in silence.

Interlude: The Ripper & The Cunning Mouse.

Chapter Notes

Without Beta.

His phone rings - *Jack Crawford.*

He declines the call and returns the device to his pocket.

He replays Bella's last words. The mention of Miriam Lass had surprised him but he supposes it's not that shocking that she had after all been one of Jack's projects.

"Cunning mouse." Hannibal murmurs, stroking a stray lock of hair from her sleeping face.

"Oh, such a cunning mouse." He compliments, smiling softly as she awakens.

She stares at him with bright watery eyes and he soothes her like an Alpha would with a pup.

"Is it time?" She asks and when Hannibal nods without words she bursts into tears.

The smell of relief thick from her skin as he cradles her and soothes her. Promises without words that she would soon wake from this nightmare.

She believes him, like a child believes their father would never hurt them.

He could still smell her blood, sweet sting of freshly cut daisies and cinnamon. He had had to get his floors re-stained.

Flashback.

Hannibal would never forget how Will had looked. There had been no fear or panic in his expression, his mouth and hands covered in the sickly blood, a pool of it at his feet. Miriam Lass' whining body at his feet. There was still time to save her; Hannibal closed the front door and did not move further.

He did not reach for the phone.

"She wanted to take me away." Will says, his voice steady and final. Unremorseful. Hannibal smiles subtly and nods his head, assuring his Omega that he was not upset with him.

"Who is she, beloved?" The officer uniform had not escaped Hannibal's notice. A rookie that had gotten lucky canvassing; it did not worry Hannibal.

“Miriam Lass. She recognised me.” Will’s words prickled Hannibal’s skin and he spared a second look to the Omega laying on the floor at their feet, perhaps having misjudged her.

“You almost took out her throat.” Hannibal observes, applying pressure to her throat. Vital arteries intact, vocal cords. She would survive if Hannibal acted quickly.

Will doesn’t flinch. His perfect beast, Hannibal admires. His hands hold his belly; a gesture that told Hannibal everything he needed to know.

“Go rest, little thing. I will take care of this.” Will looked uncertain initially, as if he wanted to object but Hannibal soothes his Omega with his Alpha and he retreats, bloody footsteps leading upstairs to disappear into his nest.

“Oh, cunning mouse,” Hannibal sighs as the Omega meets his eye. Defiant.

“You are going to be a good little mouse.” Hannibal promises, pushing a lock of blood soaked hair from her face and smiling.

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